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DECEMBER 2001

American Cinematographer

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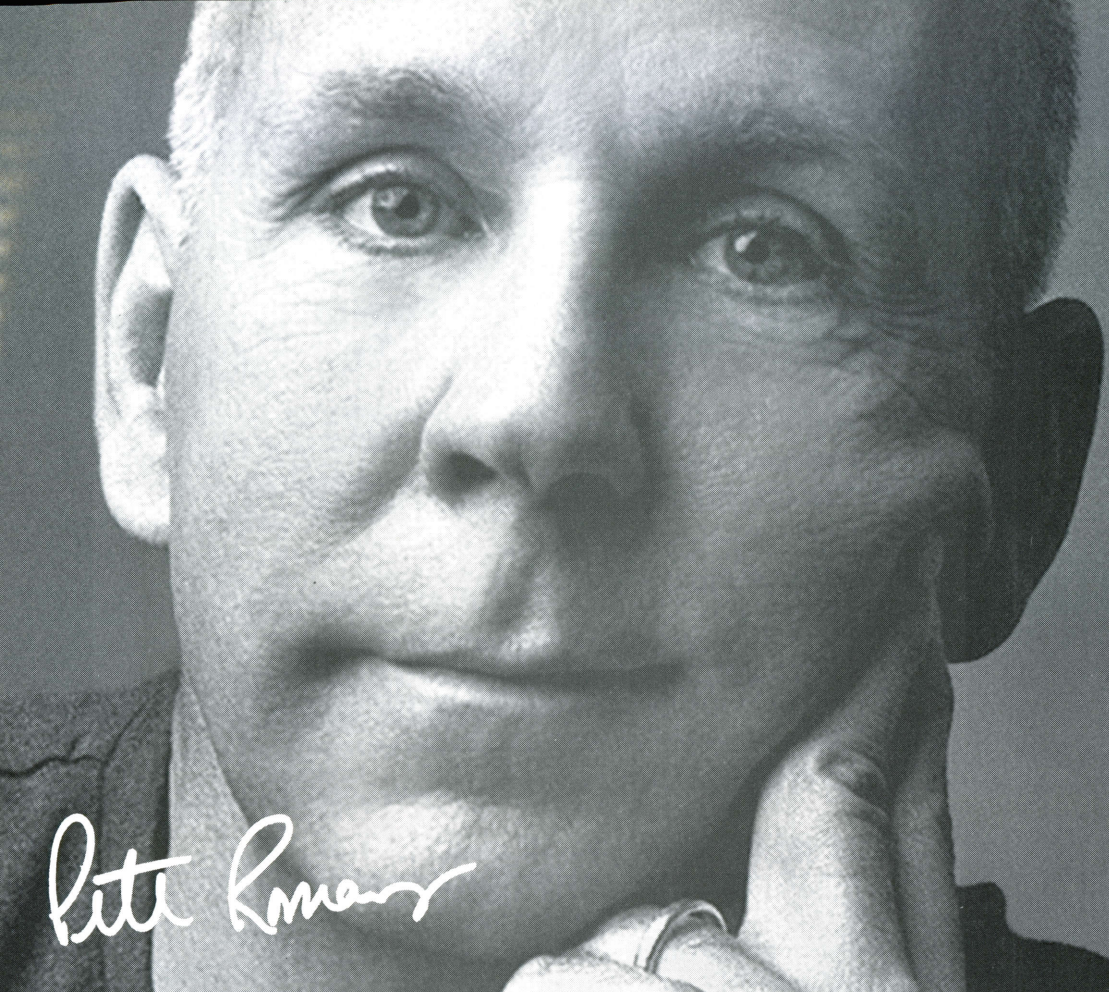
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Pete Romano

PETE ROMANO

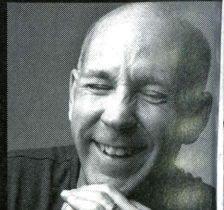
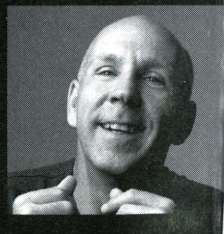
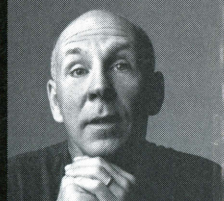
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Pete Romano has compiled more than 50 credits as an underwater cinematographer, including such narrative films as *The Abyss*, *Waterworld*, *Alien Resurrection*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *The World Is Not Enough*, *Men of Honor*, *Pearl Harbor* and *Planet of the Apes*, and many commercials. He founded HydroFlex, Inc. in 1983, as a research facility for developing underwater camera housings, lights and accessories. Romano shared a Technical Achievement award from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science in 1990 for pioneering the development of HMI underwater lights.

All these films were shot on Kodak motion picture film.

For an extended conversation with Pete Romano, visit the Kodak website at www.kodak.com/go/onfilm



American Cinematographer

The International Journal of Film & Digital Production Techniques

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On Our Cover:

Intrepid hobbits Sam (Sean Astin), Frodo (Elijah Wood), Pippin (Billy Boyd) and Merry (Dominic Monaghan) find themselves surrounded by malevolent forces in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the first film in the new *Lord of the Rings* trilogy directed by Peter Jackson and shot by Andrew Lesnie, ACS (photo by Pierre Vinet, courtesy of New Line Cinema).

Contributing Writers:

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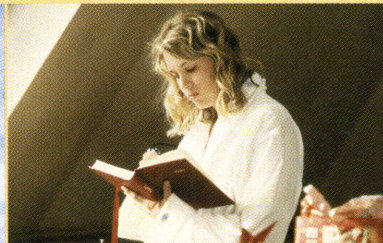
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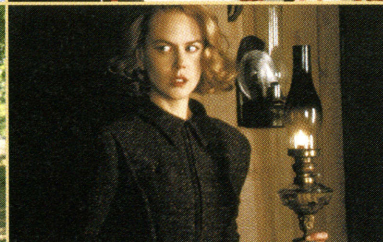
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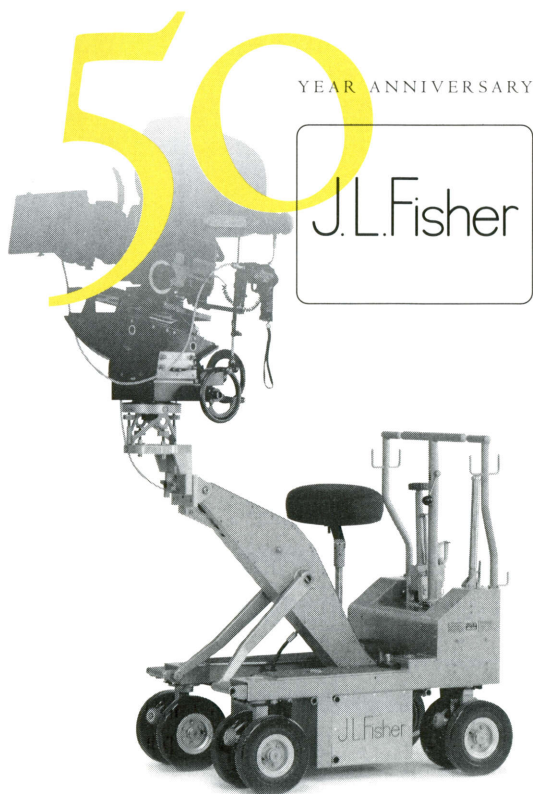
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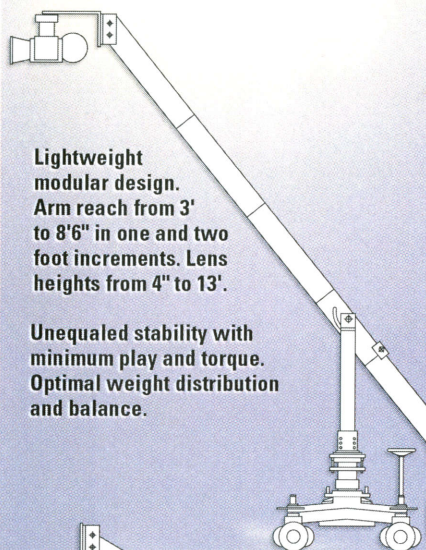
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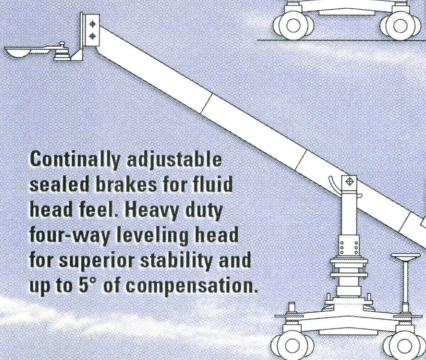
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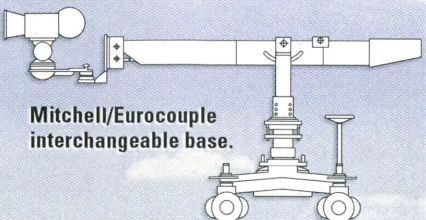


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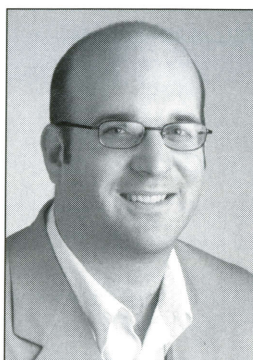
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Editor's Note



Fans of fantasy and adventure have been waiting eagerly and impatiently for this month, during which New Line Cinema will unveil the first installment of a major-budget film trilogy based on J.R.R. Tolkien's literary classic *The Lord of the Rings*. All three pictures have been directed by Peter Jackson and shot by Andrew Lesnie, ACS, who led an enormous production team that confronted the truly intimidating task of adapting Tolkien's revered saga for the big screen. After all, the *Rings* novels, which include *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King*, are quite simply the standard by

which all fantasy-based literature is judged.

Translating the author's vivid vision into the cinematic realm was a job fraught with peril and dogged by those twin demons of filmmaking: daunting logistics and Olympian expectations. Jackson and Lesnie supervised not only their own unit, but up to eight others as well, via an elaborate system involving satellite feeds. All the while, they had to try to forget that every scene they committed to film would be seen (repeatedly), analyzed (scrupulously) and debated (hotly) by millions of Tolkien fanatics around the globe.

Of course, as Jackson has acknowledged, it is the truly privileged filmmaker who is selected to spearhead such a mission. He, Lesnie and the rest of the *Rings* team took on the challenge with both gusto and a deep respect for the source material, and the results of their efforts will surely please all but the most intractable zealots.

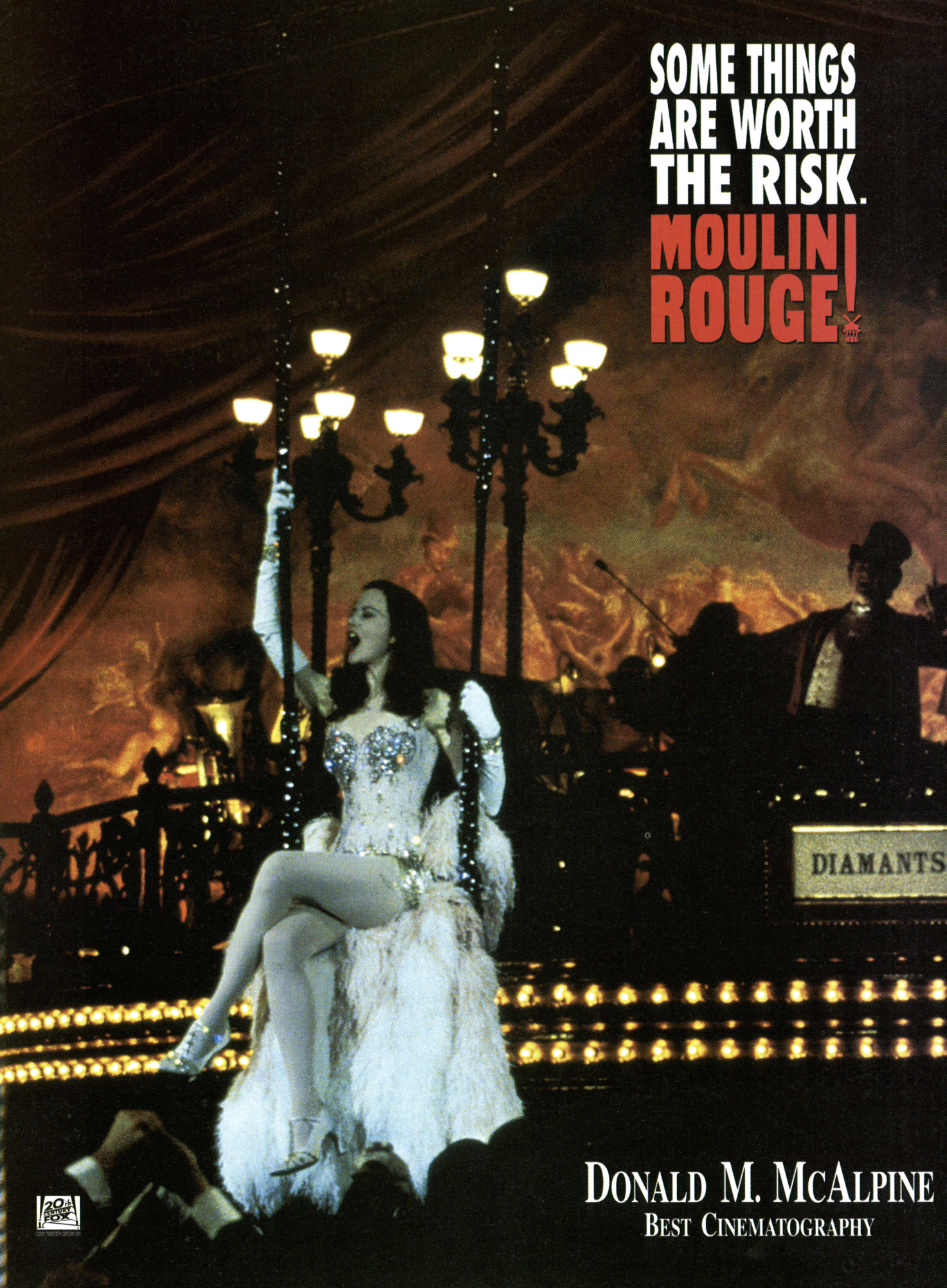
Our coverage of this momentous motion picture is nearly as ambitious. An overview of Lesnie's cinematography, as well as a sidebar on production designer Grant Major ("Ring Bearers," page 36; "Designing a Fantasy Land," page 44), were penned by Australian correspondent Simon Gray; meanwhile, here in Hollywood, AC visual-effects editor Ron Magid burned up the phone lines while grilling Jackson ("Lord of the Realm," page 52) and the film's effects experts ("Imagining Middle-Earth," page 60).

Ironically enough, this issue of AC also presents a special focus on independent, low-budget filmmaking. Our coverage elicits insights from the makers of a number of intriguing and worthwhile projects, including *No Man's Land* (page 22), *Hybrid* (page 29), *In the Bedroom* (page 72), *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (page 80), *The Courier* (page 88) and *The Devil's Backbone* (page 117).

This month's issue also offers a different kind of historical article, detailing painter David Hockney's fascinating theory that optical instruments and techniques may have been used by classical artists — as far back as the 15th century ("Through the Looking Glass," page 98). Since many cinematographers find inspiration in classical art, we felt that Hockney's ideas, which have caused a storm of controversy in the art world, would be of great interest to our readers. Let us know what you think.

Sincerely,

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Global Village

Desert documentaries put Panasonic camera to the test

by Robert Goodman

Two recent television documentaries shot in the demanding deserts of the Middle East utilized the Panasonic AJ-PD900WA 480p, a standard-definition camera that records progressive-scan images. The first production, *The Lost Dinosaurs of Egypt II*, used the Panasonic for second-unit photography, while principal photography was captured with a Sony high-definition HDW-700A 1080i. The second production, *Digging for the Truth*, relied exclusively on the Panasonic.

The Lost Dinosaurs of Egypt II is the second of two documentaries that track a team of paleontologists from the University of Pennsylvania as they comb the Egyptian desert for tiny fragments of our ancient past with toothbrushes and dental picks. Washington, D.C.-based cinematographer Mark Thalman shot principal photography with the Sony, while Los Angeles-based director/cameraman David Banks shot second unit with the Panasonic. Banks subsequently co-directed and shot *Digging for the Truth*, which explores whether it was the Palestinians or the Jews who first arrived in the land of modern-day Israel, using the Panasonic.

While the stark beauty of the desert is as cinematic a backdrop as anyone could imagine, "it's really the last place on Earth you'd want to take a television camera because of the extreme environment and the sand," notes Thalman.

When the time came to shoot *The Lost Dinosaurs of Egypt II*, Banks, who had been hired to shoot second unit, turned to Plus 8 Video in Burbank to explore B-camera possibilities. Plus 8 has supplied Banks' production company, Team Banks, with camera equipment for 15 years.

Plus 8 recommended the Panasonic AJ-PD900WA, which uses standard-definition television's pixel resolution of 720x480 but records progressive-scan images. The facility set up a demo for Banks and the project's producers that displayed the output of the Panasonic camera side by side with the output of the Sony hi-def camera. Banks was impressed by the results, and MPH Entertainment, who co-produced the documentary with Cosmos Studios, liked the economic advantage of shooting with the Panasonic.

The Panasonic records on DVCPRO50 tape in the 480p format and can switch from the 4:3 (1.33:1) to the 16:9 (1.78:1) aspect ratio. The 480p format differs from standard-def in one regard: instead of recording 60 fields, two of which are interlaced to create a single frame with the full image information, the camera records 60 complete frames per second. This eliminates the artifacts inherent when images are interlaced and increases the maximum resolution to 700 lines.

The Sony camera captures images in the 1080i format, which captures 60 fields per second on HDCAM tape. The camera has a fixed aspect ratio of 16:9 (1.78:1) with a maximum resolution of 1,080 lines.

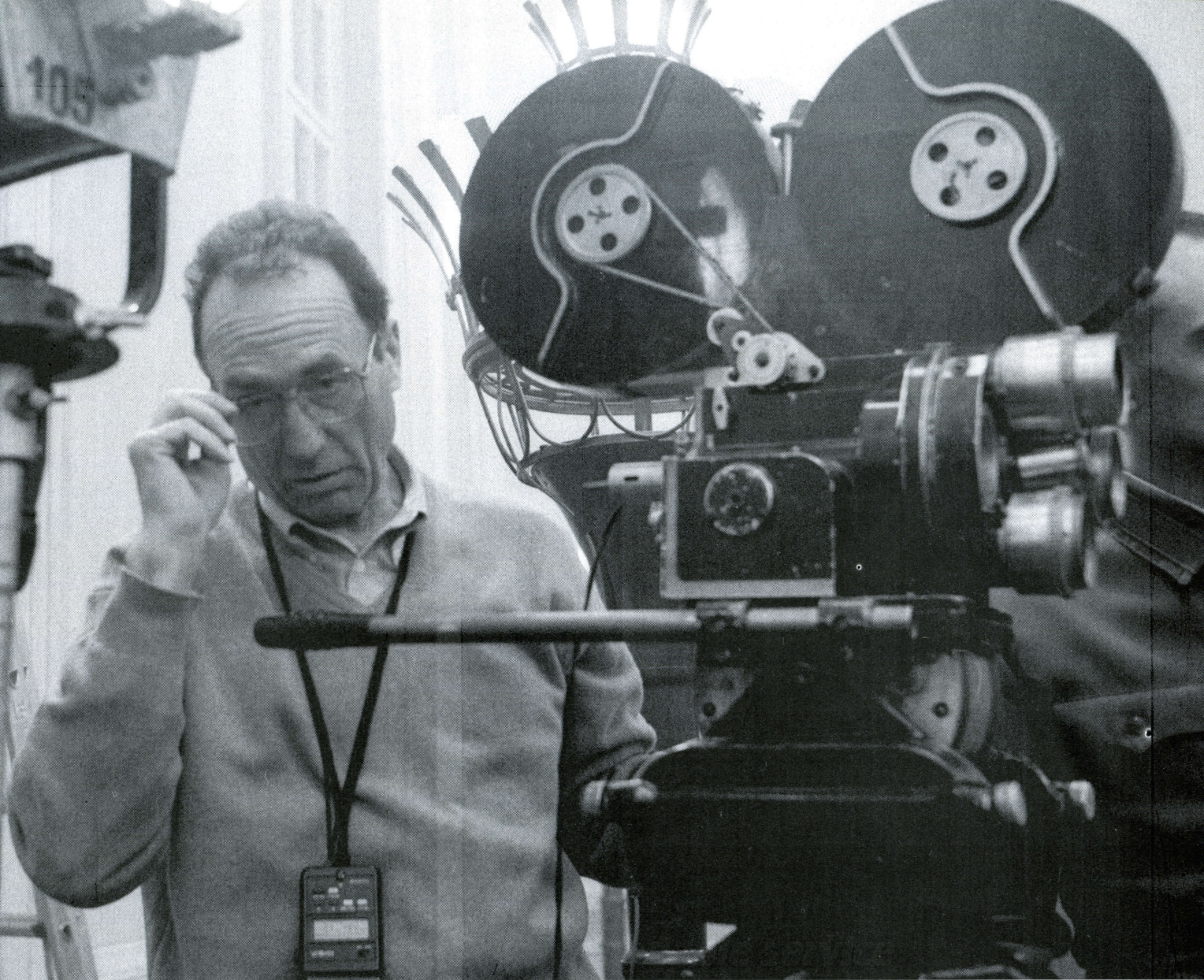
"The 480p camera was a way for MPH to shoot more efficiently and be able to up-convert the footage," explains Plus 8 president Marker Karahadian. "The camera has a lot of strengths: it's widescreen, it's a more ergonomically pleasing package than digital Betacam, and it's totally compatible with NTSC, so it can be monitored and edited easily. And DVCPRO tape is dramatically cheaper per minute than HDCAM tape."

Banks confirms that his "confidence shot straight up after the demonstration" at Plus 8, and he was certain the Panasonic camera would be a valuable addition to the production — even though it bore serial number 2.

While shooting second unit on *Lost Dinosaurs of Egypt II*, Banks used the Panasonic to capture beauty shots of the desert; he also mounted it on a Jimmy Jib for dynamic shots of the scientists at work. The Egyptian crew was responsible for setting up the jib, which Banks says he "used to drop the camera down into the pits the scientists dug into the desert floor." The camera's lighter weight reduced the number of counterweights required to balance the jib. Banks was also pleasantly surprised that "the camera's battery lasted an amazing amount of time, and the 480p tapes were so small I could carry about 10 of them in my cargo pants."

In order to move quickly, Banks decided not to "lug a 12-pound monitor with me. Instead, I took a Sony Watchman and plugged the 480p [camera] right into it." Wind was often a problem, but Banks felt "using the Jimmy Jib made the footage much more elegant. When you're shooting 16:9, regardless of whether it's hi-def or 480p, it changes everything. It's a very cinematic approach."

Thalman used the Sony camera to shoot the documentary's principal sequences, which he captured with a Fujinon 7.5-150mm T1.5 servo zoom lens and a Fujinon 5-50mm T1.5 wide-angle servo zoom. "Eighty percent of what I shot was handheld, cinéma vérité style," says Thalman. He used the camera's default setting along with the built-in ND3 filter during the day to maintain a



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Thalman says a typical day began at 7 a.m. "We'd eat breakfast and then work till sundown. I'd shoot an establishing shot and then follow one group of paleontologists throughout the day, while Dave was doing jib shots and beauty shots. I'd shoot about seven or eight tapes a day. We were rolling a lot of tape because we wanted to capture the moment.

"The biggest challenge was staying sharp enough to capture subtle moments while shooting the repetitive action of scientists digging in the desert seven days a week for six weeks," he says. "Also, sand gets in *everything*. We used rain covers to keep it out. Canned air was too feeble to make any difference." The filmmakers sometimes traveled to the nearest tire-patching shop and used an air pump to blast the cameras clean.

When the time came to shoot *Digging for the Truth*, MPH Entertainment hired Team Banks and asked the filmmakers to keep costs down by shooting exclusively with the Panasonic 480p. Banks, who shot the project in the 4:3 (1.33:1) aspect ratio, found the camera to be "a lifesaver. It's made for documentary and news shooting because it can take a beating. The tape door closes snugly and makes a tight seal, so we never had a [sand] problem with that camera.

"We had some pretty rugged locations in Israel, too," he notes. "We were riding up to the Golan Heights when our guide from the Israeli Defense Forces suddenly suggested taking a different route, which added two hours to the trip. Later we found out that snipers had shot three people on the road we were originally supposed to take. When you're in that kind of environment, the last thing you need to worry about is whether your equipment is going to work."

The Lost Dinosaurs of Egypt II will be broadcast by A&E. *Digging for the Truth* will be broadcast by The History Channel. ■

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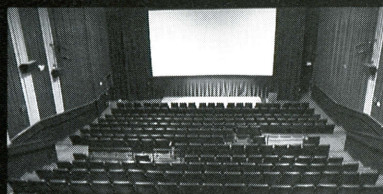
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Cited in many polls as the finest motion picture ever made, Orson Welles' 1941 masterwork *Citizen Kane* has been newly remastered from the best surviving film elements for this double-disc DVD, which features digital audio and an array of enlightening extras.

Disc One, rendered in a dual-layer format, includes the film in its original aspect ratio and two feature-length commentaries, one by film critic Roger Ebert and the other by Welles' friend and fellow filmmaker Peter Bogdanovich. This disc also offers newsreel footage of the movie's premiere, along with a gallery of storyboards, call sheets and photos.

Citizen Kane looks great in this shimmering new release, boasting sharp black-and-white tonalities that do full justice to Gregg Toland, ASC's groundbreaking deep-focus cinematography. Bernard Herrmann's innovative score has never sounded better, and you can fully appreciate Robert Wise's dynamic editing of this cinematic masterwork's nonlinear narrative.

Kane is dense with innovations in picture, sound and story. Welles moved to Hollywood at the age of 25 to make the film after he and his acting troupe, the Mercury Players, had conquered theater and radio. The flamboyant young auteur had created a national sensation in 1938 with his radio adaptation of H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*, and when he came to Hollywood he was given what Bogdanovich calls "the keys to the kingdom," in the form of a contract that gave him unprecedented control over *Citizen Kane*.

Originally titled *American* and scripted by Herman J. Mankiewicz, *Citizen Kane* is a sweeping tale that concerns the rise and fall of wealthy newspaper publisher Charles Foster Kane. The magnate is portrayed by Welles himself, who is joined in the cast by Joseph Cotten, Everett Sloane, Agnes Moorhead, Ruth Warrick and William Alland. Nominated for seven Oscars, including those for Best Picture, Best Actor and Best Director, *Kane* garnered one for its screenplay; Welles and Mankiewicz shared the award.

The original negative of *Citizen Kane* was destroyed in a fire, so Ned Price, vice-president of video mastering for Warner Home Video, and his technical team had to work from other elements to restore the film for DVD. Price's team obtained elements from private collectors and archives. The most recent discovery was a nitrate fine-grain master, which was located in Belgium within the past year.

Digital-image processing with new software created additional resolution after the film's restoration was complete. Second-generation sound elements had to be used to reconstruct the audio from the original optical soundtrack, which had used an early, experimental form of track compression and noise reduction.

Disc Two of the DVD set features a two-hour WGBH documentary, *The Battle Over Citizen Kane*, which includes great archival footage and interviews. This exceptional supplement details the largely successful efforts by publisher William Randolph Hearst, the ostensible model for Kane, to suppress the film in Hollywood. Hearst was especially outraged at what he believed was a scandalous portrayal of Marion Davies, the actual "rosebud" in his life.



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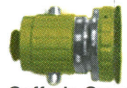
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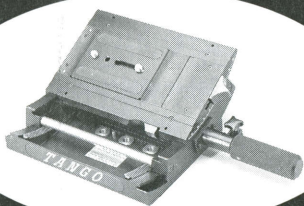
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Of course, *Kane* also marks one of the great collaborations between a director and cinematographer. Welles considered Toland's contributions to be so significant that he shared a title card with the cameraman. "Orson, who had only directed theater, assumed it was the movie director's task to set the lights," says Bogdanovich. "So during the first few days of shooting he was doing that, thinking [it] was what directors did. Toland was going around behind Welles [to make adjustments], not saying anything, and he wouldn't allow anybody to tell Welles that it wasn't his job to set the lights. Finally, somebody told Orson about it, and he went to Toland to apologize."

Toland was apparently very annoyed that Welles had been told about the "proper division" of duties. When the director asked him why he was so perturbed, Toland replied, "You didn't know what you shouldn't do. That's the way you learn."

— Ray Zone

The French Connection (1971)

Five Star Collection

2.35:1 (16x9 Enhanced), English

5.1 Dolby Surround

20th Century Fox Home Video,

\$26.98

On his audio commentary to *The French Connection*, director William Friedkin quotes the F. Scott Fitzgerald maxim, "Action is character," to describe the film's classic antihero, relentless New York detective "Popeye" Doyle (Gene Hackman). The saying is the perfect summation of Doyle, the film and Friedkin himself, who apparently bore more than a passing resemblance to his monomaniacal lead character during filming.

In his zeal to create a cop thriller unlike any other, the young Friedkin didn't hesitate to cross the occasional, pesky ethical boundary. The famed white-knuckle car chase in the middle of the film, generally acknowledged to be the most exciting in cinema history, was mostly filmed on unblocked city streets, among real civilian cars, at speeds often

topping 90 mph. "I had no reservations about doing it [that way] because I was a callow, heedless youth," Friedkin freely admits during the commentary.

Visually, *The French Connection* embraced the same kind of youthful defiance, exemplifying the deglamorized "New York style" of cinematography that revolutionized the craft in the 1970s. Friedkin and director of photography Owen Roizman, ASC (who, remarkably, was shooting his first feature film) adopted a fresh, documentary-inspired approach to the film, which was based on actual characters and events in 1960s New York. Real city locations were used throughout the film; the lighting is low-key, realistic and determinedly source-based; and the camera movement is lively and instinctive. In a risky but highly effective strategy, Friedkin often wouldn't tell his camera crew what the actors were going to do, forcing them to feel their way through the action like news photographers.

Making its DVD debut, *The French Connection* has never looked better. It has terrific sharpness and surprisingly robust colors — note the rich red tones of Doyle's Santa Claus suit as he chases a drug pusher through a grimy New York neighborhood during an undercover assignment. Some grain is evident, especially in the night scenes, but these "flaws" are due to the intentionally gritty visual approach rather than any problems with the transfer.

The French Connection has rightfully received Fox's "Five Star Collection" treatment, with plentiful extras spread out over two discs. The first contains the film and two separate audio commentaries — a lively and opinionated session with "Hurricane Billy" Friedkin and a more laid-back turn by co-stars Hackman and Roy Scheider. Labeling the latter track a "commentary" is a bit disingenuous on Fox's part, however, because neither actor seems to be watching the film as he chats about his experiences. These are really glorified interviews, however welcome they may be.

The second disc contains two equally entertaining and well-researched documentaries on the film: the BBC's

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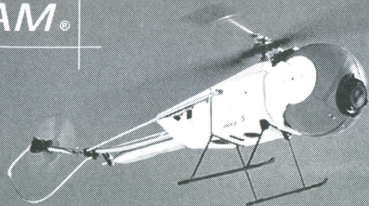
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artfully shot *Poughkeepsie Shuffle* and the new *Making the Connection: The Untold Stories*, which is hosted by Sonny Grosso, one of the original New York cops involved in the French Connection case (and portrayed in the film by Scheider). Both documentaries are rife with juicy set stories from crewmembers (including Roizman) and New York City police involved in the production.

Friedkin admits that he constantly attempted to "get [Gene Hackman] crazy," sensing that the decent-minded actor was squirming at the racist overtones of the Doyle character. The ultimately perfect casting of Spanish actor Fernando Rey as French heroin smuggler Charnier was actually a happy accident that occurred when casting director Robert Weiner confused Rey with French actor Michel Piccoli, whom Friedkin had coveted because of his performance in Luis Buñuel's *Belle de Jour*.

The commentary also fully explains the bizarre interrogation tactics employed by legendary New York cop Eddie Egan (the real-life model for Doyle), such as abruptly accusing a rattled suspect of "picking his feet in Poughkeepsie" (a tactic that's unforgettably applied in one classic scene). Elsewhere are seven interesting deleted scenes (with optional commentary from Friedkin) that add some rather extreme dimensions to the characters — watch for the shocking S&M session involving French hitman Pierre Nicoli (Marcel Bozzuffi).

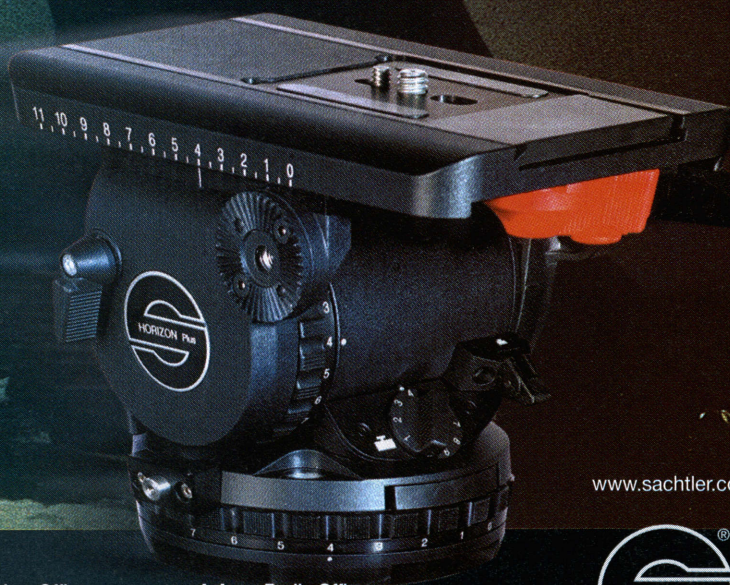
Rounding out this essential DVD are a gallery of atmospheric stills and a pair of salty trailers for the film and its John Frankenheimer-directed sequel. Both films are also available in a special two-picture DVD pack that retails for \$30.

— Chris Pizzello

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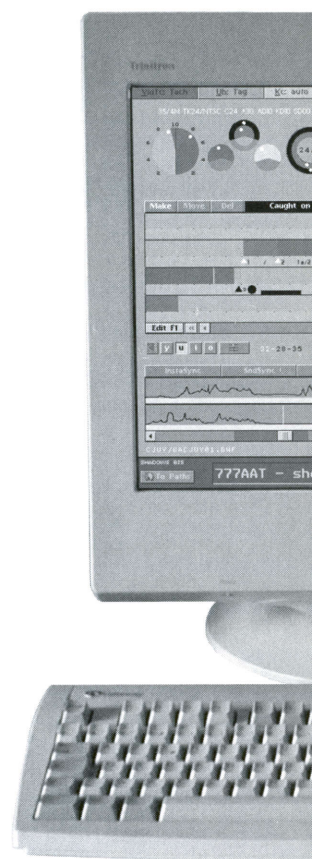
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Production Slate

A Media Circus and Kernels of Wisdom

Ciki (Branko Djuric), a Serb, peers cautiously out of the trench dug between enemy lines that he begrudgingly shares with one of his Bosnian counterparts, a soldier named Nino (Rene Bitorajac), in *No Man's Land*.



Down in the Trenches

by Jean Oppenheimer

Eighty percent of *No Man's Land* takes place in an 8-meter-wide by 15-meter-long hole in the ground, and that's precisely where the film was shot. The open-air trench lies halfway between enemy lines in what is supposed to be Bosnia at the height of the Bosnian war. (The film was actually shot in neighboring Slovenia.) Trapped in the foxhole together are two soldiers — a Serb and a Bosnian — whose animosity and mistrust of each other reflect the wider hatred between ethnic and religious groups that has plagued the former Yugoslavia for generations.

"The whole story is the conflict between these two people," affirms Belgian cinematographer Walther Vanden Ende, speaking by phone from

his home in Brussels. "We decided to shoot in Super 35 so that when we framed one character we still had space to put the other character in; that way, the audience can always see what's happening in the background. You always feel the danger, even when things are going well."

Vanden Ende, who has earned three consecutive Belgian Academy Awards (for *Noces en Gallilee* in 1987, *The Music Teacher* in 1988 and *Sailors Don't Cry* in 1989), attended film school in Brussels. He worked as a camera assistant for many years before making the leap to director of photography in 1975 with the Belgian film *Burned Bridge*. His credits include *Toto le Heros*, for which he won the 1991 European Cinematographer of the Year Award, *Farinelli* (1995) and *Le Huitieme Jour* (1997).

No Man's Land marks the feature

directorial debut of Bosnian documentary filmmaker Danis Tanovic, who also wrote the script and composed the music. The movie revolves around soldiers Ciki, a Bosnian, and Nino, a Serb, who are stranded in "no man's land," halfway between Bosnia and Serbian military lines. A third soldier, a friend of Ciki's, lies on the floor of the trench on top of a bomb that's rigged to explode if he moves. A French sergeant with the U.N. peace-keeping force, Sgt. Marchand, learns of the men's plight and tries to help, despite orders from his superiors to not get involved. When a British journalist finds out about the rescue attempt, she and a phalanx of other reporters race to the site, turning the event into a media circus.

Although the plot echoes Billy Wilder's classic *Ace in the Hole*, Tanovic rejects the label "black comedy," prefer-

Photos by Dejan Vekic, courtesy of MGM/UA.

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Top: Nino helps reveal Cera's potentially explosive predicament to another Bosnian soldier. Cera (Filip Sovagovic), a friend of Ciki's, lies on a triggered bomb. Middle: In an effort to look beyond prejudice, Ciki offers Nino a cigarette while in the trench. In an effort make the film feel as open as possible within the confines of the trench, director Danis Tanovic chose the wide frame of the Super 35 format. Bottom: Ciki gets the upper hand after head-butting Nino, knocking the soldier out.



ring to describe his anti-war picture as "a very serious film with a sense of humor. It's a humor that comes out when you live with a level of pain you can't stand anymore. You need some-

thing to get the pain out, and humor is a door."

The story's action covers a single day. Vanden Ende knew achieving visual continuity within scenes would be diffi-

cult under even the best of circumstances. Naturally, the production encountered anything but ideal conditions. Slovenia normally enjoys mild, sunny weather in August — but not during this shoot. The first three shooting days were completely lost to rain, while the succeeding seven days saw a patchwork of rain, sun, more rain and heavy clouds. Given that the film was relying almost exclusively on natural light, the varying weather posed substantial problems. "We would shoot for an hour, stop and wait for the rain to pass, then shoot for another hour before we had to stop again," the cinematographer recalls. "Since it was never sunny for very long, we could only get off a couple of takes [at a time]. If the sun disappeared behind clouds, we simply continued without it."

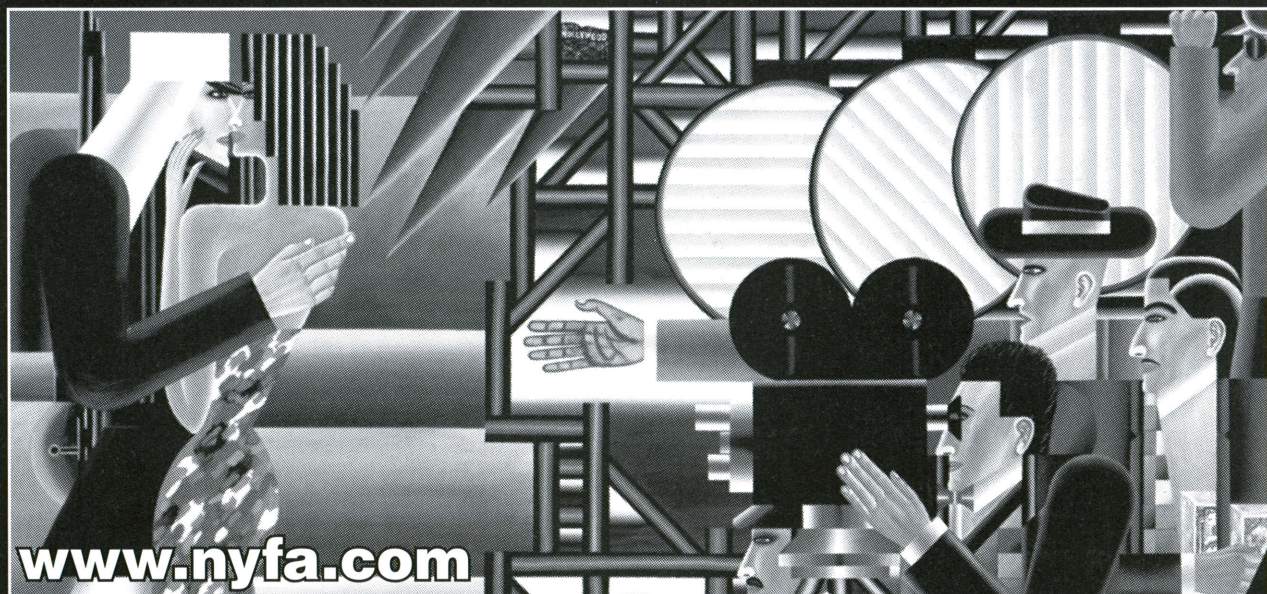
The trench had no canopy or other protective covering to keep out rain; given the single setting and the presence of only two mobile characters (the third soldier is on his back for the entire film), Tanovic wanted the film to feel as "open" as possible. The Super 35 frame allowed him to accomplish this by capturing some landscape and sky in the background.

The production had only a small lighting package, and Vanden Ende's most powerful source was a single 18K, which he augmented with a straw gel to help recreate sunlight. He also used a few 4K and 6K Pars.

The cameraman relied heavily on reflectors: silver boards and a 9-meter-square white screen covered with a shiny, highly reflective white tissue that reflected over a wide area. "Whatever angle you're on, you have the same amount of light," explains Vanden Ende, who switched to black negative fill to suggest the morning hours. (The production's one near-disaster occurred when static electricity hit the white screen as three crew members were taking it down before a storm. All three were thrown into the air and knocked out, but they all returned to work the next day.)

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Bosnian soldiers train their sights on the enemy. Below: After learning of Cera's unfortunate situation, British journalist Jane Livingstone (Katrin Cartlidge) leads a media circus to the trench.

second camera when needed. Vanden Ende normally prefers Cooke lenses, and he relied upon the S4 series (14mm to 100mm), as well as Canon 300mm and 600mm lenses. "I think Cookes are especially useful when you want part of a scene out of focus," he notes. "The defocused part is more beautiful with Cookes than it would be with, say, Zeiss lenses." He used an 18mm lens when he wanted to reveal more of the environment around the characters, but he generally stuck with a 32mm or 40mm. He employed Tiffen Ultra Contrast filters throughout the show.

While much of *No Man's Land* looks handheld, very little of the camera-work was — the floating sensation was achieved with an Aerocrane mounted on a PeeWee dolly. "Normally you can't put it on a PeeWee because of the jib arm," notes the cinematographer. "Grip Kris

Thewis built a kind of axis in the middle on which to put the arm. On one side, the arm was 3 meters, with the camera hanging from it; on the other side was a counterweight. The camera was in balance, so it stayed where it was if I didn't touch it. However, I could move it easily. If I stopped, it would stay in place perfectly, as if it had no weight."

The Aerocrane was almost always on dolly tracks or a dance floor and was frequently lowered onto the floor of the trench. One scene — captured with the crane positioned above the trench and the camera dangling into it — finds Ciki at one end of the ditch, facing away from Nino. He turns and spots Nino trying to grab a rifle off the ground, and he runs toward his adversary and rams him with his head. The camera reveals Ciki's point of view as he rushes toward Nino and smacks into him.



The film opens at night in a heavy fog. Ciki and his comrades are huddled in a circle, unable to see where they are. "It was quite a big area, and fog isn't that easy to control," Vanden Ende says with a laugh. "We therefore built four-meter-high walls around the area, left the top open [and pumped fog into it]. The enclosure was wide at one end and very narrow at the camera end, so it followed the angle of the camera.

"Outside the walls we built scaffolding and placed three Par lights on it, shooting downwards, to provide half backlight. I kept the lights separated from each other, so we had one section dark, then one lit, the next one dark, and so on."

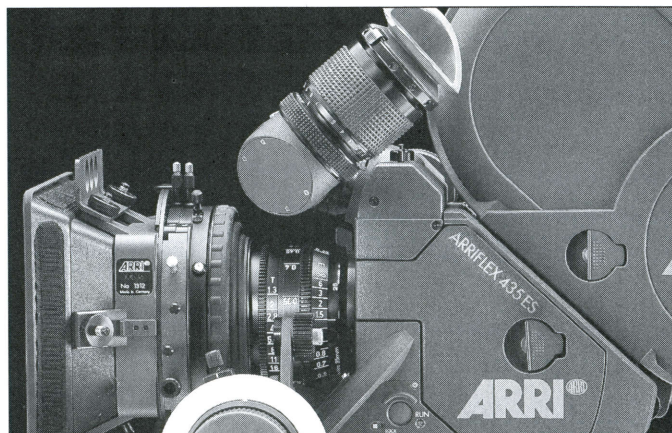
Vanden Ende also tried to keep the actors backlit for scenes that were supposed to be set in the morning or late afternoon. The closer it got to noon in the film, the more light he allowed to hit the actors' faces. When the filmmakers had to shoot morning scenes in late afternoon or vice-versa, they moved the actors around the trench to keep them in backlight.

Each part of the day had a slightly different color scheme: cool and blue in the morning, warmer and brighter at noon, and reddish towards the end of the day. Almost all of this was achieved during timing, although Vanden Ende added an 85 filter plus an 81EF to make some afternoon scenes extra red.

As soon as the production's location was fixed, Vanden Ende tested Fuji and Kodak stocks on site. He opted for Fuji F-250T 8551 and F-500T 8571, explaining, "I liked the skin tones they produced. Given the combination of the setting and the military colors, the Fuji was nicer on the faces." The film was processed and timed at Éclair in Paris, where Vanden Ende always works with timer Patrick Delamotte.

In addition to Delamotte, the cinematographer singles out gaffer Chris Hacken, focus puller Didier Frateur and grip Thewis for praise; all of them came with him from Belgium. The rest of the crew was from Slovenia, and Vanden Ende says those technicians also did a great job.

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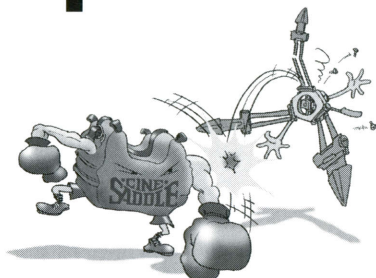
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Writer-director Danis Tanovic and cinematographer Walther Vanden Ende check a shot on a monitor. To dip into the trench, the production used a PeeWee dolly mounted with an Aerocrane arm.

Some of the film does take place outside the trench: in Serbian and Bosnian camps, at U.N. headquarters, inside a Belgium TV station and traveling along the road with a U.N. tank. International journalists descend upon the site like a swarm of flies, circling Marchand and the tanks but staying well clear of the trench because of the bomb threat. According to Vanden Ende, the sense of swirling chaos in this scene was accomplished through blocking and staging rather than camerawork.

A particularly striking shot occurs at the end of the film as Jane Livingstone, the British TV reporter who sparks the media stampede, leaves the site after being told that the bomb has been defused and the Bosnian soldier has been moved to safety. In a final irony, she doesn't bother to check the accuracy of the report. Dismissing her photographer's suggestion to shoot the now-empty foxhole, she declares, "All trenches look alike." In fact, the bomb has *not* been defused, and the soldier lying on it has been abandoned. As Jane rolls up her car window and drives off, Marchand, the closest thing to a hero the film has, is reflected in the glass. "That shot was a lucky accident," admits Vanden Ende. "We were standing there trying to figure out how to link the characters of Jane and Marchand. It was the end of the day, and all of a sudden I saw the reflection of the U.N. tank in the glass. We moved the tank to a slightly better angle and got the perfect shot."

Corn Gets Its Close-Up

by Patricia Thomson

While making his first feature, Monteith McCollum took his inspiration from some unexpected places: Kurosawa, Tarkovsky, Flaherty and Nebraska farmers. The young filmmaker liked the way the farmers used whatever parts were at hand to solve myriad mechanical problems.

Having spent summers on his grandparents' farm, McCollum, now based in upstate New York, soaked up this spirit of shoestring inventiveness and put it to good use to make *Hybrid*, an experimental documentary about his grandfather, Milford Beeghly, who developed hybrid corn in the 1930s. McCollum adopted Beeghly's use of jerry-rigged, handmade and recycled tools and applied them to his cinematography.

"It's kinda fun to invent new ways to get shots," McCollum says. And *Hybrid* is indeed the result of many peculiar inventions. In place of the usual dollies and cranes, McCollum adapted the devices around him, utilizing manure loaders, skateboards, turntables, rope pulleys, janitor's brooms and various homemade motors.

Like many idiosyncratic films, *Hybrid* doesn't lend itself to one-liners. "I have a very difficult time describing the film, because it sounds cheeky: 'It's about an old man and his love for corn'" McCollum breaks out laughing. "People look at you and you can tell they're totally disinterested. Sometimes I start out with, 'It's about this man's love for his corn, but you've got a very sexual side to this' That gets them interested. Then I say, 'But it's really not about that, it's about'"

Four years in the making, *Hybrid* is itself a hybrid creation. It's partly a portrait of Beeghly, who had an avid interest in hybridization at a time when it was considered a wicked kind of plant incest. As a bio of the prescient farmer, it contains old advertisements for Beeghly's corn seed, recent footage of him inspecting his corncobs and waxing



Photographed in black-and-white 16mm, *Hybrid*, directed and shot by Monteith McCollum, is about "an old man and his love for corn."

poetic on the beauty of cornfields in a thin, William Burroughs-like voice, and family recollections about Beeghly's general disinterest in domestic life. *Hybrid* is also a history of agricultural practices during the Depression, and it's a science lesson, explaining how corn procreates when pollen travels down the tassels and fertilizes the corn kernels. (As one farmer helpfully notes, "When people eat corn on the cob, what they're really chewing is a mouthful of ripened ovaries.")

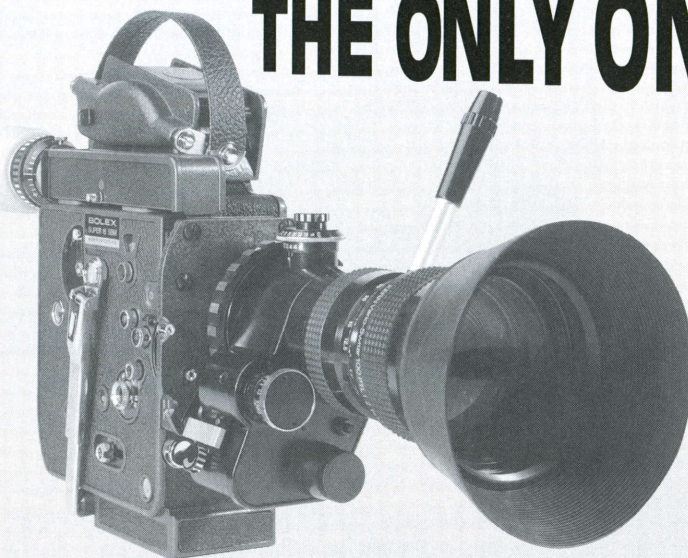
Last but not least, *Hybrid* is a lyrical piece of filmmaking. Photographed in black-and-white 16mm, it captures the quiet beauty of nature with prolonged shots of trees, animal life, wind and light. The film is imbued with a sense of nostalgia for a passing way of life, enhanced by the plaintive music of a country fiddle ensemble. (A man of many hats, McCollum manned the violin and forks.) *Hybrid* impressed city slickers enough to get a screening at New Directors/New Films in New York last spring, and it was then exhibited at various arthouses. McCollum is now in negotiations with several broadcasters for a TV airdate in 2002.

The catalyst for the film was an anthropology class at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where students were instructed to produce something on their families. McCollum set about making a 20-minute film on his grandfather and agricultural practices in the 1930s. "As I got going, though, I became

Photos courtesy of Monteith McCollum.

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One of the documentary's stars — besides the corn — is Milford Beeghly, McCollum's grandfather.

Beeghly developed hybrid corn in the 1930s.



more interested in trying to push myself with cinematographic techniques and capturing certain moods."

At the time, McCollum was immersing himself in classic cinema, which determined his choice of film stocks. "I had been seeing a lot of really gorgeous black-and-white films, like Flaherty's *Man of Aran*, Kurosawa's early films, and [pictures by] Tarkovsky," he

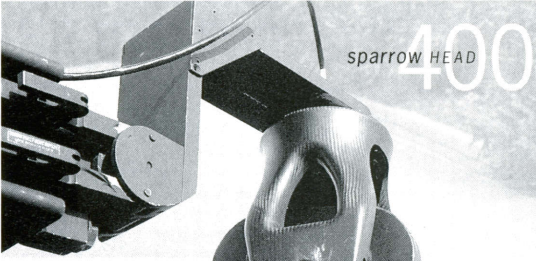
recalls. "Those filmmakers learned so much about form and composition from working in black-and-white. When they got to color, they were already way ahead of themselves." McCollum thought he would attempt the same path.

McCollum chose Kodak's black-and-white 7222 and 7231 negative films. "I started shooting on negative because I

was a student and was afraid of making an exposure mistake," he explains. As it turned out, he liked black-and-white's particular qualities, especially for nature shots with moving patterns of shadow and sunlight. "Black-and-white negative is a little grainier than reversal. When the sun would come out, the grains would shimmer, really sparkle, like grains of sand. It was really beautiful."

And beauty was something to which McCollum aspired. "With Robert Flaherty and those early films that were uninhibited by sound, you get amazing beauty. But when I watch documentaries now, I don't see that; it's pure information, and I feel sad about that. Pare Lorenz, Flaherty and the early pioneers of the documentary world were really looking at the beauty of the form, together with the information. So when I'd go out to make a moving shot, I wasn't thinking about what I'd use it for; I'd just try to make a beautiful shot, and I'd think about its use later."

McCollum paid a great deal of

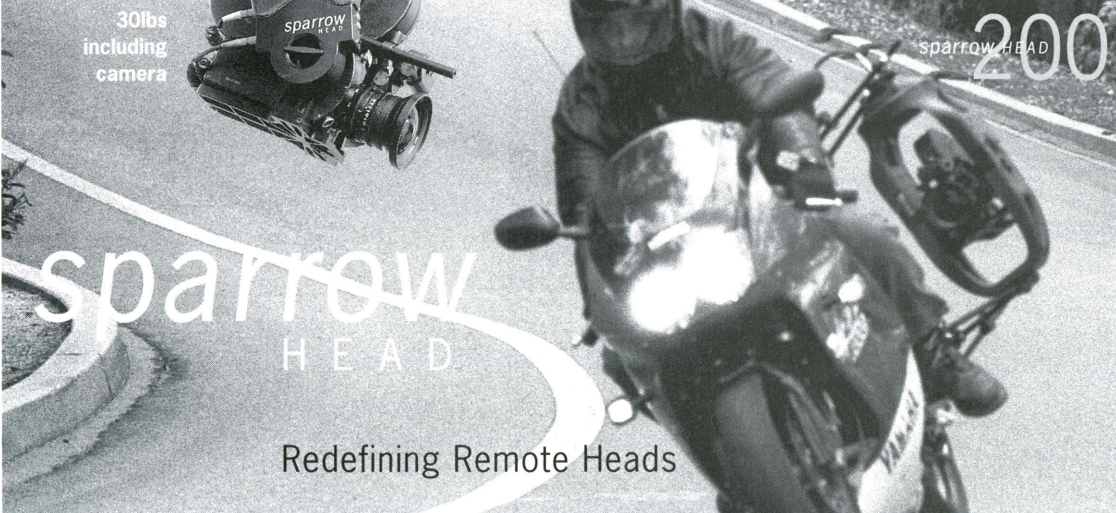


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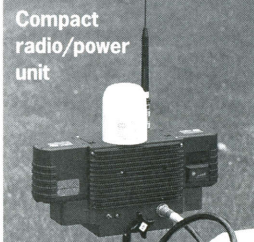
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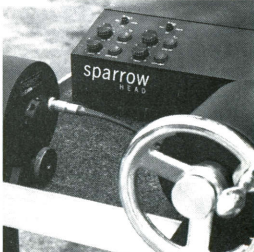
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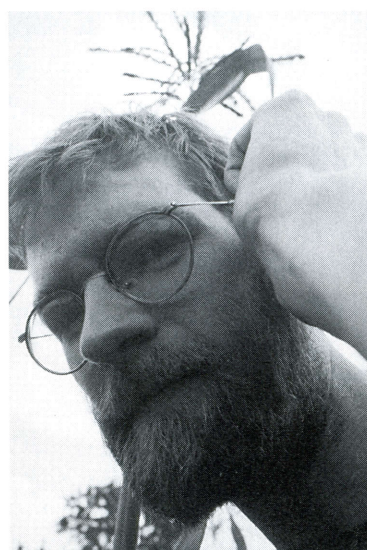
attention to the choreography of his shots. But rather than rent equipment to help move the camera around, his tool of choice was the farm's manure loader. Similar to a Caterpillar, the small Gehl tractor had great maneuverability, a smooth hydraulic system and a loader that could lift the cinematographer 15 feet in the air. It functioned as dolly and crane rolled into one. The only trouble was that McCollum couldn't shoot and drive at the same time. "Initially I was crushed," he recalls. "No matter who I had out there helping me, they couldn't get the hang of the tractor." As a result, McCollum wound up being the "tractor man," while Mike Jarman, Vedin Pevzner, and McCollum's wife, filmmaker and *Hybrid* editor Ariana Gerstein, assisted with additional camerawork.

Although McCollum generally used a Bolex camera, he made use of a CP-16 with an Angenieux 12-120mm lens for some of the more elaborate shots that required a zoom. One of the first such shots that he attempted was

inspired by Tarkovsky. "I just love his slow zoom-ins. He did this thing where he would do a dolly for awhile, and then his zoom would take over. It was such a smooth and strange maneuver that I wanted to try it."

More tricky was the choreography for what he calls his "*Rashomon* shot." This required the camera operator to be high up in the manure loader as the tractor rolled after Beeghly as he walked around the farm. The loader gradually lowered to ground level so the camera operator could step off and cross paths with the farmer. "As he stepped off the loader, though, the loader was moving and he was reversing his axis, so he'd get the tractor in his view," McCollum explains. "I had to bolt out of there as fast as I could to get out of the frame. We rehearsed that a lot."

Both the Bolex and the CP-16 were subjected to physical endurance tests worthy of a Samsonite luggage commercial. McCollum attached the Bolex to the back of a manure spreader



McCollum adopted his grandfather's way of doing things by applying jerry-rigged, handmade and recycled tools to his cinematography.

"and it got totally caked," he says with a laugh. The CP-16, in turn, weathered a 15-foot drop from the hydraulic loader. "It went lens-first down into the dirt and sunk down about three inches. That ripped the base of the lens away from the camera." The filmmakers managed to get it working again. "It's a really solid,

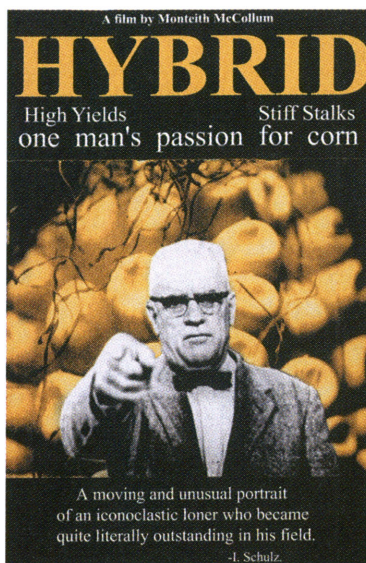


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The film's wry poster art showcases Beeghly's golden kernels.



sturdy camera," McCollum remarks.

The Mayfer clamp used for the manure spreader also allowed McCollum to secure the Bolex in a variety of other places, including the bottom of a janitor's broom. When pushed around the floor, this rig provided a

corn's-eye view of the farm shed, where McCollum filmed some memorable stop-motion scenes of corncobs rolling in the hay (for a section on fertilization). The filmmaker also Mayfer-clamped the camera to the fork of a bicycle and to the exterior of a crop duster.

Some of his inventions didn't quite work. McCollum devised a vertical dolly using a rope pulley slung over a tree, with boxes at each end, one containing the Bolex and the other counterweights. Someone on the ground had to catch the camera box as it came flying down. But because this sequence was filmed in the middle of a snowy winter, there was no orienting perspective. "You'd see cool shots of trees passing by really close, but the one thing that bothered me was that you couldn't grasp how high up you were because there was all this snow, this negative space," he says. Twenty feet wound up looking like five. When springtime rolled around, however, McCollum had moved on to other

experiments, so he didn't bother to try the technique again.

Many of the filmmaker's experiments involved animation. At the Art Institute, he had become very interested in puppet animation. Subsequently, in *Hybrid*, McCollum animated nature itself. Much of the film's ethereal beauty comes from his use of time-lapse photography. Punctuating *Hybrid's* narrative are shots of clouds passing and sunlight rolling over a barn during the course of a day, or of a small tree standing before a house, quivering as if overbrimming with life.

"I like animation so much," McCollum says. "Even when there's nothing happening, there's something happening. Often I would shoot with the [camera's] animation [function] on because I just was curious to see what a simple kind of movement would look like — like that vibrating tree. It was hardly blowing that day, so it's a very small movement, but I really liked the feeling of that shimmer."

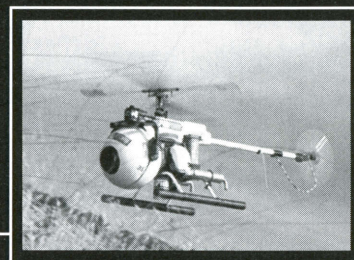
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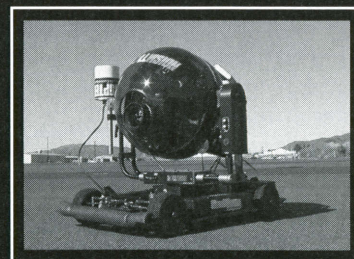
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Sometimes McCollum stood outdoors with the camera and advanced the film himself, but he also created several mechanisms to automate the process. "When I started getting interested in animation, I decided to make a few different motors that would allow different shutter speeds for time-lapse work. I bought a little book called *The 555 IC Timer Handbook* from Radio Shack. It's one of those little kits that allows you to create stuff, if you have the imagination." He assembled a timing mechanism that would signal the motor to trigger and advance one frame.

McCollum used this device on everything from sweeping landscapes to sprouting corn. In several key sequences, he brought corncobs to life — animating raucous mating dances in the shed or, later, filming a more delicate dance in which a corncob spins on an old phonograph and seductively sheds its leaves, followed by an intimate close-up of the pollen-laden silk lightly brushing across the ripe kernels.

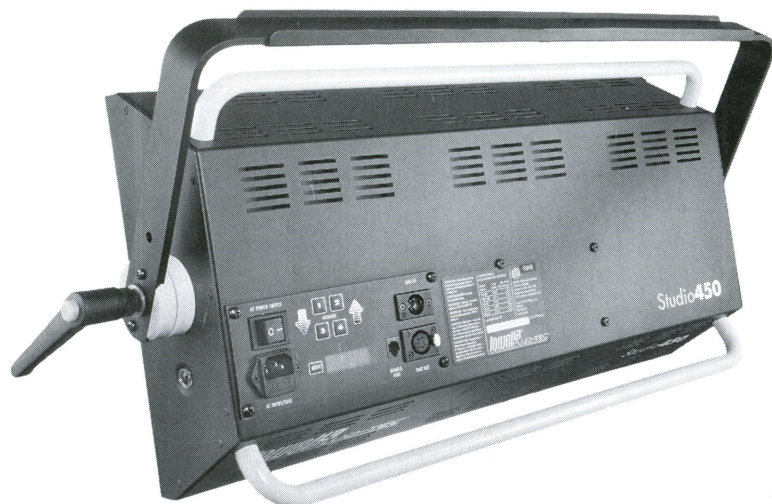
McCollum also left the motor on in unexpected places, such as when filming old family photographs. Here again, he opted for a ragged, hand-crafted look, rather than the immaculate polish made familiar by Ken Burns' documentaries, which smoothly zoom in on and pan across archival photos. "I basically animated my zooms," McCollum says. "I wanted them to have an energy that made you realize the camera was shooting, instead of living inside the photograph, which is more of the Ken Burns approach."

Using multiple layers of glass on his animation stand, McCollum also sprinkled dirt over the photos, providing texture and interest as he racked focus through the layers. Devoting a room in his Chicago apartment to the animation stand, McCollum carefully tended kernels for time-lapse images of sprouting corn. With dirt everywhere, the room even took on the scent of a Nebraska farm. "You'd walk in and it'd smell like a greenhouse," McCollum

admits. "I didn't vacuum that room for I don't know how many years." Not that it mattered. "I had so much dirt in that movie, it would get into the scene no matter what." ■

The Stock That Wasn't There

A typo in Jay Holben's October article on *The Man Who Wasn't There* ("The Root(s) of All Evil," pp. 48-57) resulted in the assertion that the film's release prints were done on Eastman Kodak's "5269, a high-contrast, black-and-white title stock." The high-contrast panchromatic stock's actual production number is 5369.



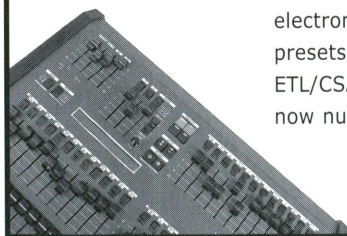
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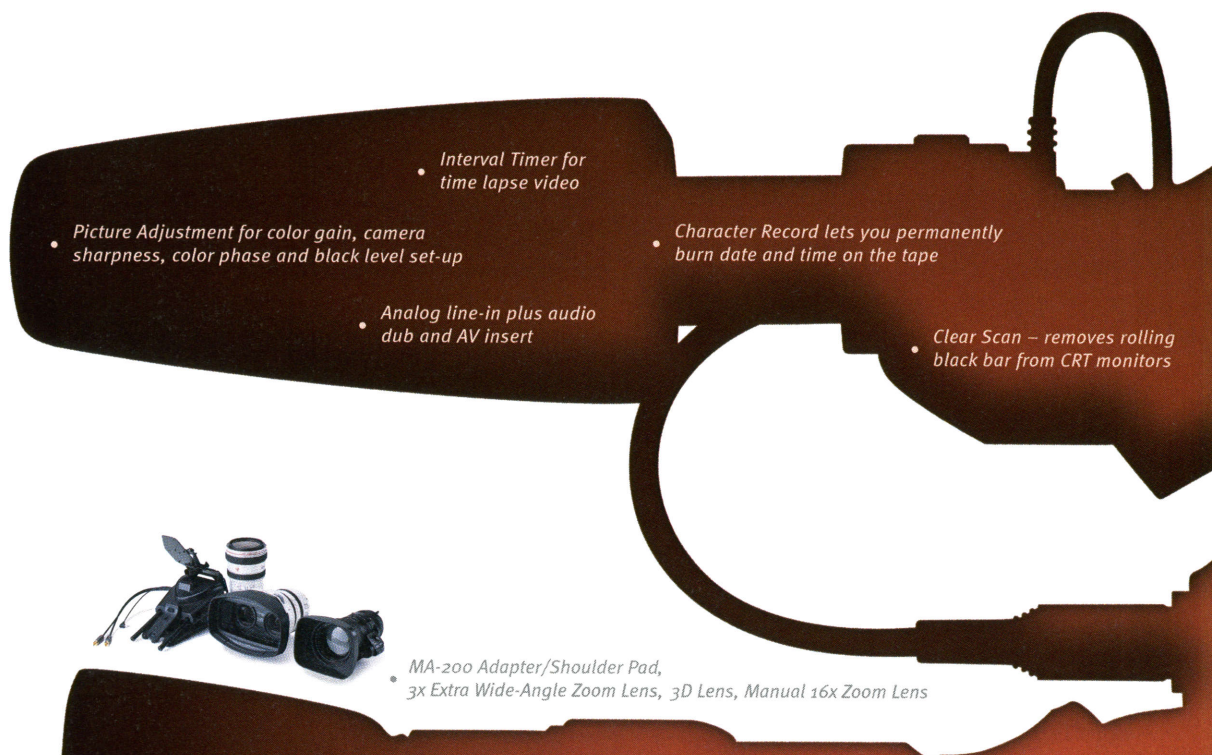
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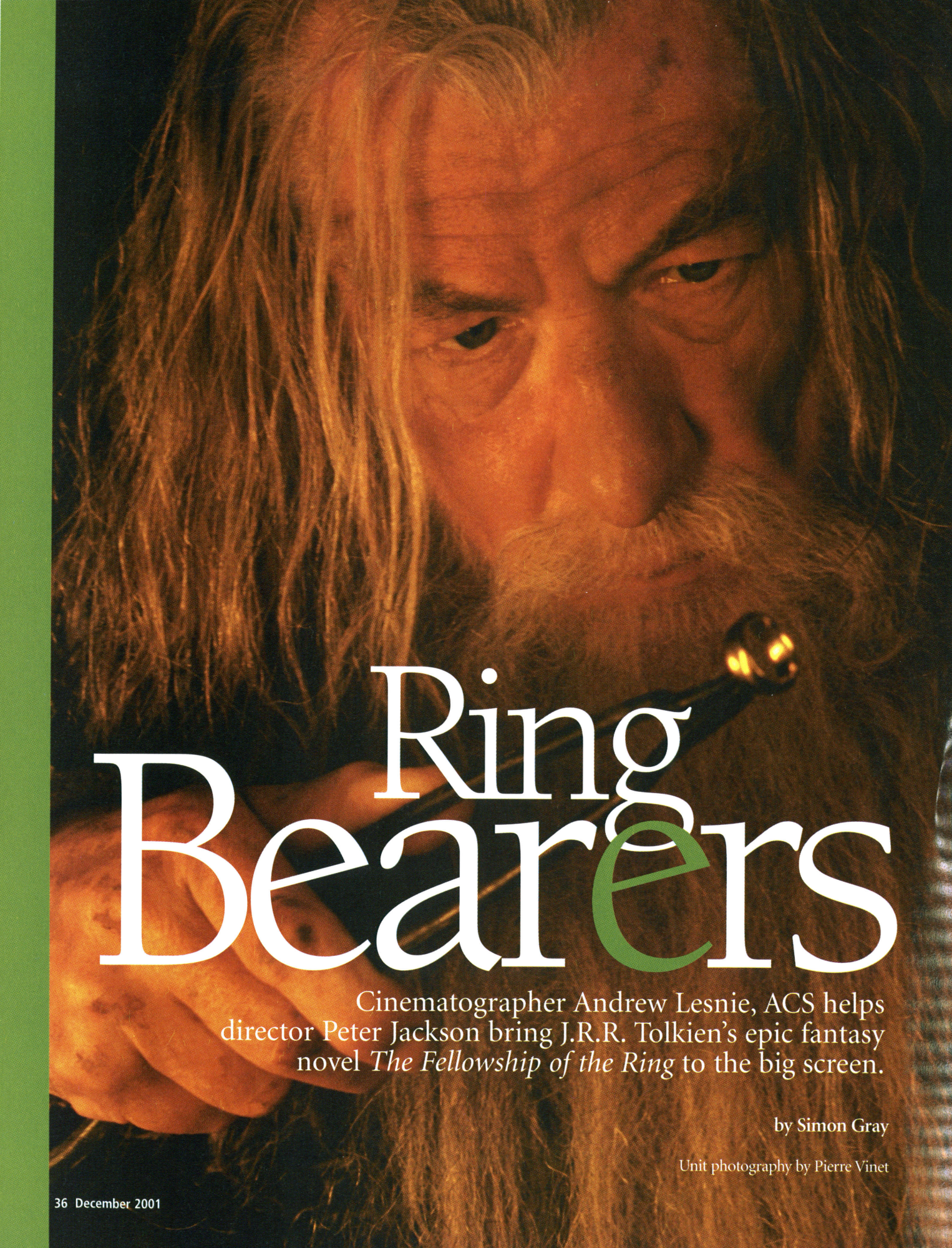
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Ring Bearers

Cinematographer Andrew Lesnie, ACS helps director Peter Jackson bring J.R.R. Tolkien's epic fantasy novel *The Fellowship of the Ring* to the big screen.

by Simon Gray

Unit photography by Pierre Vinet

In 1954, a strange yet intrepid company of Hobbits, Elves, Dwarves, Men and a tall, intimidating Wizard traversed the Atlantic and set foot on the shores of the United States. *The Fellowship of the Ring* had arrived. Forty-seven years later, *The Fellowship* will revisit America, this time on the big screen, in the most anticipated film of this holiday season.

The Fellowship of the Ring is the first installment of director Peter Jackson's three-part adaptation of British author J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Since its publication in the mid-1950s, the trilogy has sold millions of copies around the world, has been voted "Book of the Century" in countless polls, and has popularized the fantasy genre introduced by Tolkien's first novel, *The Hobbit* (1937). Nearly 50 years later, the trilogy continues to influence literature, comics, films, television and computer games, not only by virtue of its ideas and concepts, but also by its ability to tell personal stories in extraordinary and epic settings.

The story begins as the Hobbit Bilbo Baggins (Ian Holm) leaves his nephew Frodo (Elijah Wood) a ring that has the power to render its wearer invisible. As Frodo soon learns, however, the seemingly innocuous present is much more than it seems. The mysterious and intimidating Wizard Gandalf (Ian McKellen) reveals that the souvenir of Bilbo's adventures is none other than the One Ring greatly desired by the malevolent Dark Lord Sauron. If the ring falls into Sauron's possession, his evil shadow will dominate all of Middle-Earth. The only way to avoid this catastrophe is to destroy the ring by casting it into the volcanic fires of Mount Doom, which lies at the heart of Sauron's dark domain of Mordor. To undertake this dangerous quest, a Fellowship of Nine is formed; trav-



eling with Frodo are fellow Hobbits Sam (Sean Astin), Pippin (Billy Boyd) and Merry (Dominic Monaghan), as well as Gandalf, Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen), Legolas the Elf (Orlando Bloom), Boromir (Sean Bean) and Gimli the Dwarf (John Rhys-Davies).

One of the many who read *The Fellowship* as a teenager was cinematographer Andrew Lesnie, ACS, and he says he had long believed that a true cinematic version of the work "could never be made." In the late 1970s, Lesnie studied cinematography at the Australian Film,

Television and Radio School, during which time he worked with renowned cinematographers Don McAlpine, ASC, ACS; Brian Probyn, BSC, ACS, and Bill Constable, ACS. After a brief stint as a freelance current-affairs cameraman, Lesnie returned to assisting on mainstream productions; he also shot 16mm low-budget short films and music videos. During the 1980s, he regularly photographed second-unit footage for Dean Semler, ASC, ACS.

Lesnie has twice been named Australia's Cinematographer of the Year (in 1995 and 1996), and has

Opposite page: Good Wizard Gandalf the Grey (Ian McKellen) examines the One Ring, a magical source of malevolent power that is coveted by the Dark Lord Sauron. This page, top: A fearful Frodo (Elijah Wood) takes refuge behind a tree. Bottom: The mischievous Pippin (Billy Boyd), the stout-hearted Sam (Sean Astin) and the loyal Merry (Dominic Monaghan) join the Fellowship of Nine to help Gandalf and Frodo try to destroy the ring by casting it into the volcanic fires of Mount Doom.

Ring Bearers

Gandalf (right) begins to suspect the presence of the One Ring when Bilbo Baggins (Ian Holm, below) uses it to perform a disappearing act at his birthday party.



garnered ACS Golden Tripod awards for his work on *Doing Time for Patsy Cline* (for which he also received the 1997 Australian Film Institute's Award for Best Cinematography), *Babe*, *Temptation of a Monk* and *Spider and Rose*. Lesnie's credits also include *Two If by Sea*, *The Sugar Factory* and *Babe: Pig in the City*.

Although he forged an immediate rapport with Jackson, Lesnie still took a few days to say yes to *The Lord of the Rings* project. "After all," he says, "we're talking about 15 months of principal photography;

multiple units shooting simultaneously; huge sets; rugged locations ranging from snowcapped mountaintops accessible only by helicopter to actual swamps; and macro, miniature, aerial, scenic, mountain and water photography — as well as the issue of maintaining one's physical, emotional and intellectual stamina over a two-year period."

Any early jitters Lesnie may have felt were quickly allayed, however, by the tremendous amount of preparation that was already well underway. "What I noticed most

when I came on board, especially in the wardrobe [designed by Ngila Dickson], the art department and Richard Taylor's Weta Workshop, was the staggering attention to detail. Peter had been on the project for several years and had very definite ideas about the look of Middle-Earth. We agreed that the film should feel like a prehistory of the world, that it should look real. Tolkien takes us into a time 7,000 years ago, when the world was inhabited by Men, Hobbits, Elves, Dwarves, Wizards, Trolls, Orcs, Ents, Ringwraiths and Uruk-Hais. *The Lord of the Rings* takes place at a pivotal time in mythological history, the dawn of the age of man."

Setting Out on the Long Road

Lesnie immersed himself in the project by rereading the books and going through hundreds of sketches and paintings created by Tolkien artists Ted Nasmith, Alan Lee and John Howe. (Lee and Howe served as conceptual artists for the production.) "The art department was a constant source of inspiration for me," Lesnie recalls. "In the main hallway was a huge mural that was a condensed visual interpretation of the narrative for the trilogy. It consisted of conceptual drawings, set designs, costume designs, location photos and so forth. It was a matter of throwing everything into one great big pot and letting it simmer." A big pot it certainly was, for the three films entailed 274 days of principal photography encompassing 600 scenes, 350 sets and more than 4 million feet of exposed negative.

"I'm a big believer that script and performances are the two main staples of any good film, and on previous films I'd designed the photography to reflect the subtext or internal monologues of the characters," Lesnie continues. "*The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, however, deals with such a staggering number of issues



and takes so many directions that it's better to let the process operate subliminally. That way, your work starts springing out of a different place than you might normally anticipate." While Lesnie and Jackson viewed other films for elements such as staging or stylistic treatment, both knew that the books were the obvious source of inspiration. As Lesnie declares, "Tolkien's writing is exceptionally eloquent in its depiction of feeling and mood."

Covering the Quest

While Lesnie had particular ideas about what he wanted visually, he wanted all of the cinematographers involved in the project to be able to make contributions to the shoot. There were sometimes as many as nine units operating on *Fellowship*, and to communicate with the other cinematographers Lesnie instituted a "Notebook Club" in which each cameraman logged the necessary information from his shoot and then exchanged information. Lesnie recalls that "most of the major sets were pre-rigged from plans designed by chief lighting technician Brian Banskroft and myself, and all of the cinematographers and gaffers stayed in regular contact. Many mornings I had a phone in one hand and a meter in the other."

Leading the other units were New Zealand cinematographers Allen Guilford, John Cavill, Alun Bollinger, Simon Raby and Nigel Bluck, along with New Zealand operators Richard Bluck, Peter McCaffrey, Cameron McLean, John Day, Paul Samuels, Gerry Vasbenter and Rewa Harre. "The commitment and stamina of these cinematographers was matched by their crews," Lesnie attests. "We had three full-time drama units, the main unit, a support unit and a second unit, which handled the big, logistically complex action sequences. The miniatures department headed by Alex Funke [an Academy Award



winner for *Total Recall*] had four units shooting at any one time on 68 miniature sets. The aerial unit headed by Phil Pastuhov utilized Wescam, Spacecam and Tyler mounts, and the visual-effects cinematographer was Brian Van't Hul. There was also often a scenic unit, as well as 'guerrilla' units that were assembled for specific purposes throughout the filming. With all of these units, the dailies sessions were sometimes very long — we'd start out with 100 people, and after five hours we'd look around and see that four out of the five still there were asleep!"

Lesnie describes Jackson's camera style as "very energetic and fluid. He's always pushing the envelope. For Peter, the camera is a character, an active participant in the drama. Some directors like to hang back and be more objective, but Peter is like a kid standing at the barricades of a big street parade: he's just itching to join the show." Jackson's propensity for working close to the actors, sometimes at a distance of only 10 inches, necessi-

tated a working aperture of T4 (or higher for shots with critical focus tolerances). "My A-camera focus puller, Colin Deane, is amazing, but Peter's style was a challenge even for him," Lesnie says. "We used every multiple-camera technique, such as shooting simultaneous reverses, capturing masters and close-ups at the same time, as well as reaction shots from other characters, and Brian and I always accommodated those situations. Peter comes up with great ideas on the spur of the moment and it's important to have the systems in place to allow for that spontaneity. It made for some adrenaline-charged filmmaking!"

Arri Munich supplied the production with 21 cameras — including Arriflex 535Bs and 435s, Moviemax SLs for the Steadicams, Mitchell cameras for the miniatures department and Arri 35-3 and 2-C units as crash cameras — for the duration of the shoot. The filmmakers employed prime lenses ranging from 10mm to 800mm (a combination of Zeiss Standards and Ultra Primes), along with Cooke and

The chief of all Wizards, Saruman the White (Christopher Lee), schemes to acquire the evil ring for himself.

Ring Bearers



Andrew Lesnie's lighting lends a romantic aura to scenes involving the beautiful Elf Arwen (Liv Tyler) and her paramour, the proud warrior Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen). A 20K created a shaft of blue moonlight for the first sequence, while Xenons and smoke effects were used to establish shafts of moonlight in the second. During principal photography, the second scene was shot in more conventional color temperatures and then timed in post to be cooler and more diffused.



Angenieux 25-250mm HR T3.5 zooms. Canon telephotos handled the longer end of the range, and the production also used macro and Revolution lenses. The equipment was set up by Arri technician Manfred Jahn and maintained by Peter Fleming at Camera Tech Ltd., a Wellington-based company. All three films were shot in the Super 35 format, and Lesnie requested that the ground glasses for each camera have only 2.35:1 aspect ratio frame markings and center dots. "It's a lot cleaner for all concerned to concentrate on one format," he explains.

Lesnie employed Kodak stocks EXR 50D 5245 and 200T 5293, Vision 500T 5279 and, for visual-

effects work, SO214. He rated the 79 two-thirds overexposed at 320 ASA, and the 93 one-third overexposed at 160 ASA. Lesnie eschewed timed workprints in favor of one-light workprint dailies to avoid any ambiguity about what was going on with the various units' camera negatives, and the printer lights stayed in the low to mid-30s for the entire production. He chose the EXR stocks because he sought a soft image with decreased contrast. "The light in New Zealand can be quite hard and contrasty. There's very little pollution and the light has a strong amount of UV in it. However, we were looking for a more 'European' sensibility."

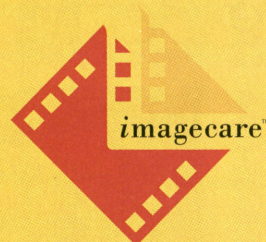
Scaling the Heights

One of the major considerations in bringing *The Fellowship* to the screen was the well-known fact that the average height of a Hobbit is just 3'6". To create this illusion onscreen, Jackson and Lesnie utilized a variety of techniques, such as scale doubles (short or tall stand-ins who doubled for the Hobbits or other characters), scale sets, forced perspective and motion control. The large scale doubles, who were at least 7' tall, were often employed for situations involving over-the-shoulder shots looking down at a Hobbit who was talking to a taller character, such as Gandalf or Aragorn; the small scale doubles stood in for the Hobbits during wide shots where the actors' faces were not visible.

Describing a typical motion-control setup, Lesnie details, "We had to do those types of shots in two parts. First, we shot reference [with a scale double as stand-in] background-plate and clean-plate passes. Then, the actor playing the Hobbit was placed in front of a bluescreen and the motion-control move was scaled up by about 40 percent. We did the bluescreen shots straight away for the benefit of the actors, so they could continue the scene while it was fresh in their minds.

"Historically, forced-perspective shots have been 'lock-offs.' Our desire to create in-camera forced perspective for a moving camera prompted Brian Van't Hul and key grip Harry Harrison to conceive and design a system that utilized differently scaled props moving in a synchronized motion with the camera through the use of motion-control equipment. This process was dubbed 'Slave Mo-Con' and allowed two actors to perform live and achieve different scales with a moving camera."

The sets depicting Bag End offered a somewhat simpler solution to the problem of scale. Production designer Grant Major (who had



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Ring Bearers

Galadriel (Cate Blanchett), the queen of Lothlórien and the Lady of the Golden Wood, glides across the water in a swan boat. To lend the character an ageless, mystical aura, Lesnie shot Blanchett's close-ups with the "Galadrilight," a special rig of Christmas-tree lights mounted next to the camera.



previously collaborated with Jackson on *Heavenly Creatures* and *The Frighteners*) and art director Dan Hennah constructed two identical sets for the interior of the Baggins residence. Each set was constructed with real materials, such as wood paneling and fixed wooden ceilings. One set was built to scale so that the actors playing the Hobbits would appear to be in correct proportion to their surroundings, and the other was constructed on a scale that was 40 percent smaller. In the second set, the actors playing characters larger than Hobbits, such as Gandalf, had to hunch over to avoid hitting the ceiling. The short and tall characters were then filmed in separate sets with matching lighting and camerawork. This solution caused more than a few

headaches for the crew — literally. Lesnie reports that the scale set frequently resounded with loud, painful thumps that were invariably followed by some choice cursing.

Starting at the Shire

From the outset, the filmmakers were determined to stage the adventures of the Fellowship in a fantastic yet believable world. This objective was possibly realized to its fullest extent in the creation of Hobbiton, the serene hometown of Frodo Baggins. The Hobbiton exterior location was not so much built as it was grown. At Matamata on the North Island, a total of 5,000 cubic meters of grass, flowers and vegetable gardens were planted 12 months before shooting began. "We wanted

the weather to age Hobbiton naturally," Major explains.

Lesnie imbued The Shire with an idealized, romantic look. "We treated Hobbiton as a celebration of a simple life," he says. "I used a color scheme with golds and greens, and we scheduled to shoot with as much sunshine as possible." Though he added some warmth by using 5293 with an 85B in front of the lens, Lesnie generally eschewed the use of filtration in favor of achieving the desired look in the timing. "Being too aggressive in filtering would have neutralized the greens by pushing the color into the magenta layer," he notes.

For a night sequence in which Bilbo Baggins has a huge birthday party in an open field, Lesnie recreated firelight and moonlight, a combination that permeates most of the film's night scenes. "We used flaming torches and gas-bars as actual sources for the firelight where we could, but their usefulness is limited. The best way to artificially reproduce firelight is to have several units pulsing, none with the same pattern; that way, the firelight effect feels more organic. We built firelight rigs that had eight small heads with $\frac{3}{4}$ CTO on each, fired into a piece of poly. Four of them were constant to provide general exposure, while the other four all pulsed in random chase patterns. My key lights were 2K, 5K and 10K Fresnels, used either as bounced sources or aimed through frames [of diffusion], and all of those lamps were warmed up. For the moonlight effect, we used Muscos and Dinos with $\frac{1}{2}$ CTB."

Adventures in Bree-Land

In contrast to the idealized world of The Shire, Lesnie wanted to introduce elements of menace and unease into the scenes set in the "frontier town" of Bree. "Bree is a menacing transition point. It's a fairly aggressive and tough feudal community. At the Inn of The

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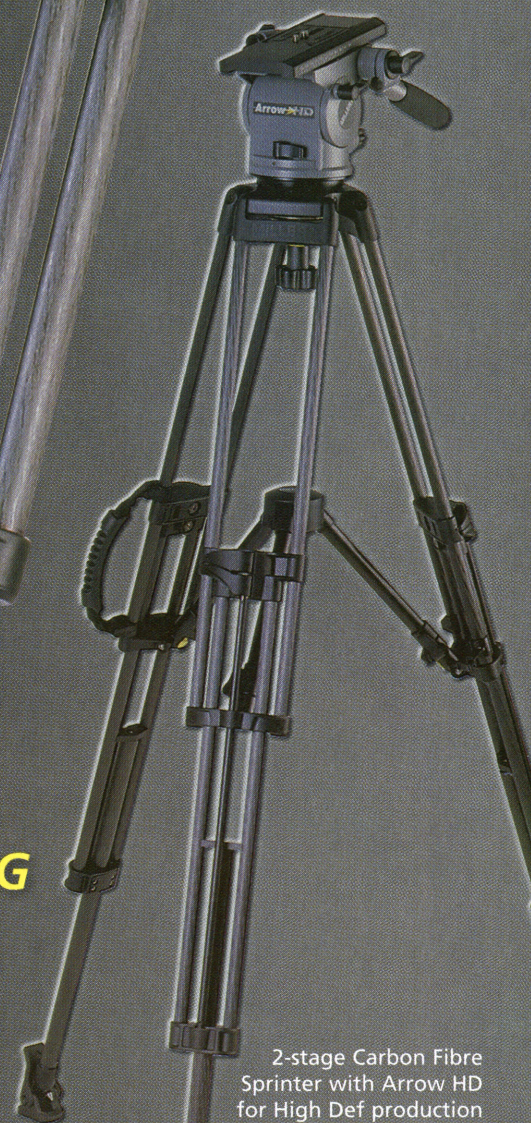
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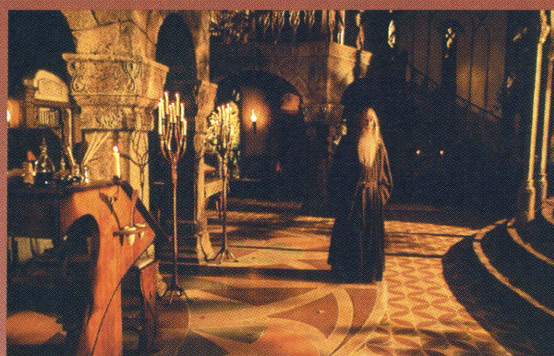
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Designing a Fantasy Land



Production designer Grant Major went to great lengths to recreate the fantastic settings of Tolkien's novel. Above, Gandalf moves through Elrond's chamber at Rivendell; below, Bilbo Baggins plays host in his Bag End Hobbit dwelling, which was constructed to specifications that would help sell the illusion of the character's diminutive stature.

Production designer Grant Major proclaims that *The Fellowship of the Ring*, is "unlike anything I have ever done before." On a logistical level, Major had to deal with the enormous scope and wide variety of sets, costumes and props, while on an aesthetic level, he was creating a mythical Middle-Earth world that had to be presented as a totally believable reality, down to the smallest detail.

Major acknowledges the support of Tolkien artists Alan Lee and John Howe in the cinematic conceptualization of Middle-Earth. "I hadn't worked with concept artists to such a great degree before, yet because of the nature of this project I was very much reliant on their work. Alan and John came onto the project at about the same time as I did, bringing with them all of their prior knowledge of the *Ring* series," Major says. Each artist brought with him a distinctive style. While Lee's influence is more discernible in *The Fellowship*, Howe's more melancholic sensibilities come

to the fore in the second and third films. Notes Major, "Alan's work brought that sense of English nature to the project, as well as Tolkien lore. His work has a nice sense of understatement and realism, which was of primary importance. John's work is perhaps more Gothic, and works very well for the end of the trilogy."

During initial discussions with Lee and Howe, Major devised visual styles for all the different races in the film, such as Elves, Dwarves and Orcs, and concepts for the key sets and locations. For the Hobbiton exterior location, Major sought an area that featured deciduous English oak trees. "We found a piece of farmland that had a rough geography of what we were looking for," he recalls. With the help of the New Zealand Army, the land was resculpted to Major's specifications. "We cut roads and recontoured the Party Field, and we built more hills for the Hobbit homes, as well as a main access road. We also built façades for a variety of Hobbit holes. Some were scaled down, while others were Hobbit size." A planting program was then undertaken, with grass, hedgerows, gardens and an orchid sown 12 months before shooting was scheduled to commence.

Major's established preference for working with real materials was carried over to the interior sets of Hobbiton. "For Bag End, we went to a lot of trouble to find slabs of oak to use as wood paneling. Of course, because Hobbit holes are round, we had to do a lot of steam-bending of the timbers. Bag End was built twice, so for the smaller set we needed to use wood grains that were of the same type as the other set, but finer-grained."

For the Elvish kingdom of Rivendell, Major utilized and emphasized natural shapes, forms and textures. Describing the sets as "very ephemeral, with decorative scrolls,

lattice work and autumnal motifs and natural forms as embellishments," he points out that the structures were made from oak and were three to four stories high. Seventy-five percent of the Rivendell sets were constructed on location, and there were also several large studio sets. The Rivendell buildings were designed as though they had been turned inside-out, with an absence of walls enabling characters to walk unhindered from the inside to the outside. "We used fairly traditional materials such as wood and shingles and tried to make Rivendell look a little bit worn. Toward that end, a lot of the surfaces were beginning to crack and their color was fading, the implication being that the sun had faded the surfaces over time, revealing underlying colors that had been painted over."

In contrast to Rivendell, the Dwarvish city of Moria was rendered with a cooler color scheme and multiple layers. Major points out that "Moria is an underground city, so there is an overlaying of architecture onto the natural rock formation. On top of that, there is the vandalism of the Orcs and Trolls, as well as parts of the architecture that have broken away. I wanted to start with what had been a very successful and rich culture and to reflect the Dwarves' love of stone and mining for the riches of the earth. There is also a functional, structural quality to the Dwarvish architecture, as it had to hold up tons and tons of stone and rock.

"The creation of an entire other world was a challenge and took a lot of work from all concerned," he concludes. "We built from scratch every single prop seen in the film, we cast our own glass for windows, and we made our own trees. I was lucky to work with a huge pool of talent that made the film come together, and I'm personally proud that many of these people were New Zealanders."

— Simon Gray





Cornered within the Mines of Moria, the members of the Fellowship prepare to do battle with a marauding band of Orcs.

Prancing Pony, we wanted to create a sense of foreboding, so we permeated a very, very slight amount of yellow-green into the grade just to take the look away from a conventional color temperature.”

The sojourn at The Prancing Pony marks the point when the Hobbits realize just how dangerous the Ringwraiths are, after the evil creatures attempt to assassinate the Hobbits as they sleep. Lesnie bathed this dramatic and violent scene in hard blue moonlight. “When the Wraiths enter the room, there are four little beds contrasted with the huge, looming figures drawing swords. The Wraiths’ costumes are black, so only the armor of their gloves and the silver of their swords can be seen in the moonlight.”

Lesnie adopted the same use of contrast for the night exterior shot that shows the Wraiths’ arrival in Bree. “As they ride up the deserted, muddy streets at night, they are black figures passing dark buildings. In such a situation, it’s almost a matter of lighting for black-and-white because you’re attempting to create separation between the elements. I was lighting for shape because we didn’t want to show the Wraiths in too much detail.” The cinematogra-

pher maintained this sensibility for all of the scenes featuring the Wraiths. “I used edge and rim lighting. It was more a matter of extracting light from them through the use of cutters and flags. The Wraiths are not a natural occurrence, so they don’t and shouldn’t conform to the natural laws of light or physics.”

Realizing Rivendell

In stark contrast to the lush greens and golds of The Shire and the dark, almost monochromatic Bree, the Elvish realm of Rivendell is rendered in autumnal colors. “The word for Rivendell was indeed autumn,” Lesnie states. “On one level, that was the physical atmosphere that we wanted to invoke, but Rivendell also reflects the decay of the Elvish empire. While Rivendell was designed by the Elves to be at one with nature, it is a place where the Elves have really let nature take over. In short, the Elves’ days in Middle-Earth are numbered.”

Once again, a good portion of this effect was achieved via Major’s production design, which features floral designs and leaf patterns in the woodwork, as well as hand-carved door frames, pillars and statues. The principal sets built for the Rivendell

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Ring Bearers

Right: Cinematographer Andrew Lesnie (standing at right, in baseball cap) supervises a close-up involving pyro effects. Bottom: While filming the Fellowship's fantastic voyage, the crew treks through drifts of faux snow on a soundstage.



scenes were the chambers of Elrond (Hugo Weaving), the Council Circle, a forest complete with a bridge, a waterfall and an Elvish forge. The lavish set was well-utilized, with a large number of daytime, night, twilight, interior and exterior sequences staged to fully exploit Major's work. In addition, a Rivendell exterior set was built in a nature preserve, taking full advantage of the surrounding natural forest.

To cover the variety of scenes and the looks they required, Lesnie hung a vast array of space lights, Dinos and Xenons from the grid built into the set's ceiling, and ringed the set on the ground with 20Ks. He wanted to establish a soft ambience

punctuated by shafts of light, a strategy that was applied to both the day and night scenes. "The major scene that takes place on this set is the Council scene, in which *The Fellowship* is forged. The sequence was treated as a very warm autumn afternoon with the feeling of the soft sun coming through the trees and hitting the Council area. Of all the scenes set at Rivendell, this one had the least contrast; the sunlight breaking through the trees was half to a stop over the ambient light, while the fill was a stop and a half under."

For the night scenes, Lesnie kept the ambience moody through his use of contrast and color. "There are two night scenes that follow each other. The first is between Aragorn

and Boromir, who are later joined by the Elven princess Arwen [Liv Tyler]. For that scene I had some lavender-blue ambient light and a 20K creating a shaft of blue moonlight that penetrated the whole set." For a nighttime encounter between Aragorn and Arwen, Lesnie used the Xenons to establish shafts of moonlight breaking through the forest canopy, accentuating them with subtle use of smoke. "For that sequence I decided to apply a more 'classical' blue, which is a bit kinder on skin tones. When you use lilac and lavenders, the actors' skin tones can sometimes veer too much toward magenta. I lit that scene for beauty, because it's one of the rare moments where Aragorn reveals his true feelings to the woman he loves. I've always equated the blue end of the spectrum with the concept of truth."

For a sequence involving Gandalf and Elrond, Lesnie utilized a series of lavender, lilac and salmon gels to create a suitable twilight feel. Lesnie also added some diffusion during digital timing to provide Rivendell with a delicate glow befitting an Elvish kingdom. "I put the diffusion in during the grading, because there are so many effects shots throughout the Rivendell sequences that I thought it better to wait until I could see the entire sequence. During the digital-grading process, you can use the software to emulate different types of diffusion filters. We treated ours as a Tiffen Pro-Mist, softening the highlights but not the blacks."

Down in the Depths

Perhaps the most dramatic sequences in *The Fellowship of the Ring* take place in the all-but-deserted Mines of Moria. The mines once resounded with the clamor of Dwarvish miners, but the miners dug too deep into the earth and unwittingly unleashed dark and evil forces. The mines are now a place of

death and decay, inhabited by hordes of ferocious Orcs and Trolls. "We made the decision early on that the Mines of Moria would be desaturated, a look we achieved in the grading," Lesnie comments.

Unlike the fire- and moonlight of the previous scenes, there was no natural light source in the underground mines. Lesnie employed an underexposed base ambience, with soft sources adding texture to the environment. "The walls of the chambers were dark and gray stone, yet they were very textured. To bring this out, we used big, directional lamps as a soft toplight or a long, raking sidelight. The only sources of light for the Fellowship's passage through the mines were Aragorn's flaming torch and Gandalf's magical staff. We had several versions of the staff; one was electric with a bulb and cable and another was battery-powered. The light increases and decreases depending on Gandalf's temperament or his desire to see more. We used the staff as the justification for creating a continuous pool of light around the Fellowship, and the illumination was created by fading Fresnel units up or down and by using Chinese lanterns on boom poles."

For a brief and poignant scene at the tomb of Balin, Lesnie borrowed from the conceptual artwork of Alan Lee. "Alan had painted a strong and dramatic shaft of light falling onto the tomb itself. We recreated that using a 4K Xenon with a bit of smoke to accentuate the shaft. That was the principal light source in the room. I used it as a backlight, bouncing it back into the actors' faces for fill."

For the thrilling confrontation between Gandalf and a flying, fire-breathing monster known as a Balrog, Lesnie again replicated fire-light, but this time on a much more dynamic scale. The fight takes place on a thin stone bridge over a huge

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Ring Bearers



This page: Elrond (Hugo Weaving) oversees a Council meeting at Rivendell, the Elven refuge he has established to defend against Sauron. Opposite page: A lighting plot details Lesnie's approach to the Rivendell set.

fissure in the rock floor. Molten rock boils and spits deep within the fissure. "There was a lot of kinetic lighting in that sequence," Lesnie says. "We did close-ups of Ian McKellen where he was surrounded by so many units that I lost count of how many lighting cues there were. We needed to show the growing light of the Balrog as it towered over Gandalf, the sparking interaction between Gandalf and the Balrog's swords, and the lightning strike that occurs when Gandalf drives his staff into the bridge, shattering it. Poor Ian was confronted by a complete armada of modern lighting technology. It must have been like a disco for him!"

Much of the mine environment consisted of sets rendered both in miniature and full size, but the largest chambers were created digitally. Lesnie says that the opportunity to create "digital lighting" excited him. "There were no natural sources of light, so we had to introduce lighting concepts to illustrate depth. We rim-lit the pillars to get perspective, because we wanted to show the audience the past grandeur of the Dwarf civilization."

Luminescent Lothlórien

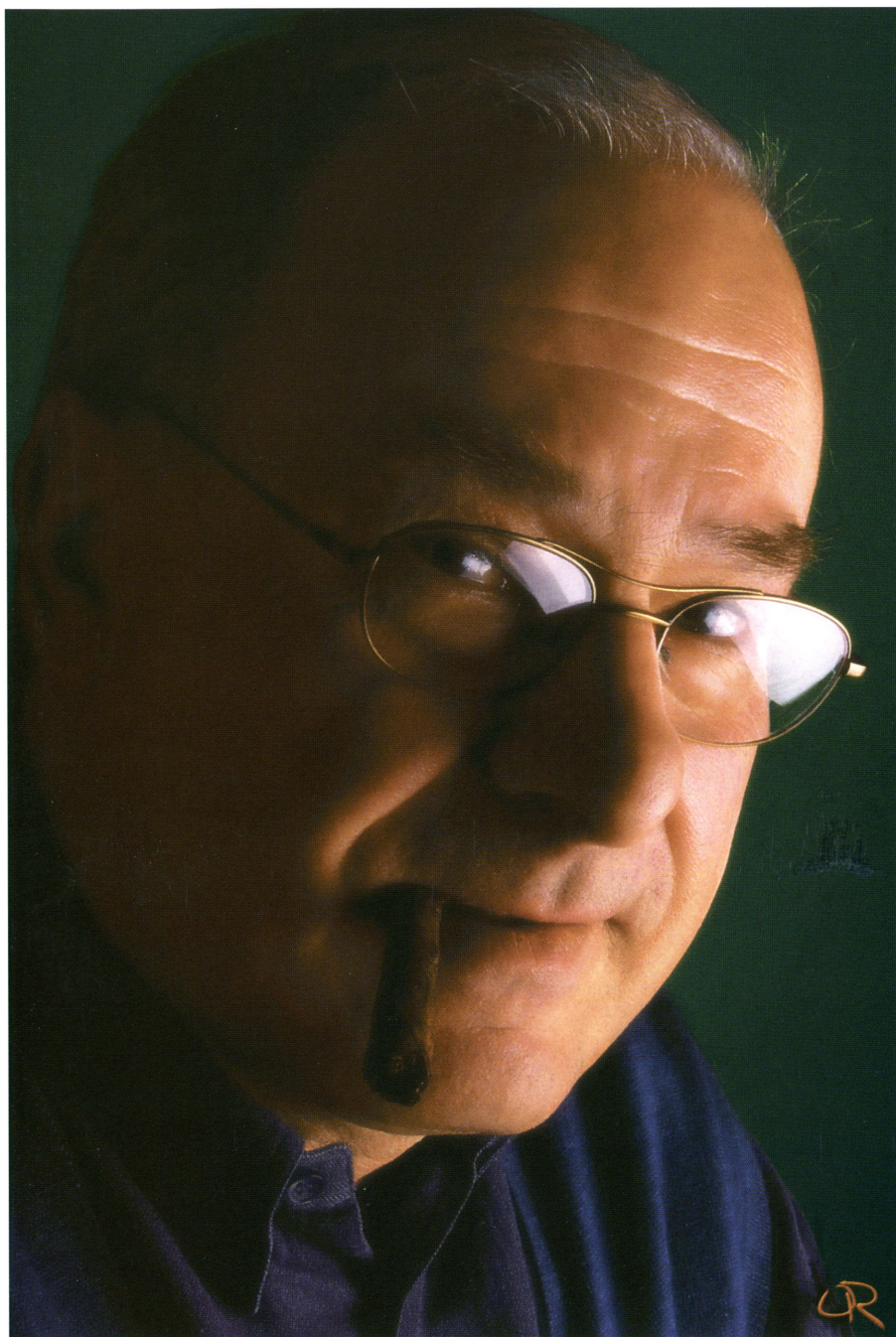
The glow and glimmer of Lothlórien, the realm of the High Elves, could hardly have been in greater contrast to the dank melancholy of Moria. There are essentially two parts to the Lothlórien sequences — the forest on the outskirts and realm itself — and each had a slightly different appearance. "In the forest, which was an actual location, the ground and trees are covered in moss," Lesnie explains. "We wanted a very warm, late-afternoon look, something just before twilight, so we placed ungelled Dinos with spot bulbs down one side of the forest and gunned them through the trees. It was a gorgeous look, and we were able to work this scenario whether the sun was in or out. The light was just clipping the trees, providing highlights rather than frontal lighting; that lent the trees orange edges, which worked really well."

"In Lothlórien itself, everything is slightly cooler and lavender to impart an ethereal feel. This color has a fragile quality to it because Lothlórien is a cerebral, thinking

world. We used the same kind of diffusion we'd used at Rivendell in order to connect the Elvish realms. Once again, I used space lights to get an ambient exposure, and I also raked the forest with Xenon lamps to get a low, warm sidelight." Lesnie enhanced the ethereal effect with twinkling lights, an effect he achieved by aiming lights through layers of foliage and then moving the foliage, as well as placing small units in the background of the shots so they would appear in soft focus against the darkness.

To achieve a glowing, luminescent quality for the Elvish Queen Galadriel (Cate Blanchett), Lesnie used soft light exposed at key. Lesnie also extended Jackson's predilection for eyelights. "Peter likes to see eyelights, and to create that effect we usually used 'wands,' which were two 2-foot Kino Flo tubes taped together. In close quarters, these wands are ideal and virtually instantaneous tools; they have four intensity levels, they're cool and very flexible, and they're perfect for handholding. For the character of Galadriel, however, I wanted to

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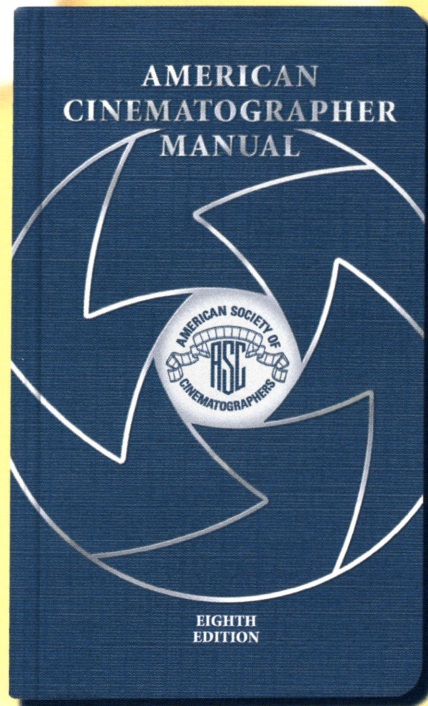
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ABOUT THE EDITOR: Rob Hummel is uniquely qualified to edit this book. He is senior VP of Digital Cinema at Sony Electronics. He was formerly a technology executive at DreamWorks SKG and Technicolor. He is an Associate Member of the ASC, an active member of the SMPTE, and has served as Executive VP of the Technology Council of the Motion Picture and Television Industry.

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Ring Bearers

The affable Lesnie says that he relished the production's epic challenges, which involved "a huge learning curve" despite his experience.



create a special eyelight, because Tolkien describes her by saying 'no sign of age was upon her, unless it were in the depths of her eyes; for these were keen as lances in the starlight and yet profound, the wells of deep memory.' In order to achieve that quality, we created the 'Galadrilight,' which was simply a rig of hundreds of Christmas-tree lights

mounted next to the camera. This technique placed many reflections in Cate's eyes, creating a wonderful otherworldliness. Her skin is so luminous that sometimes I didn't have to use any fill, because the Galadrilight was doing the work."

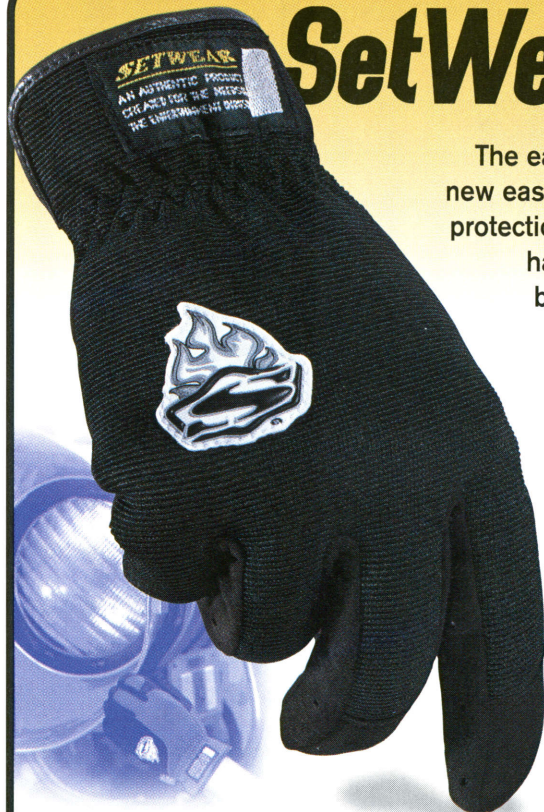
It's All in the Timing

Digital timing was as an integral part of the filmmakers' plan from the outset. "It was always a critical part of the film's fabric," Lesnie confirms. "With this kind of technology, there's a legitimate fear that the cinematographer will be cut out of the creative process once a production moves into post. However, thanks to the support of Peter and his co-producer, Barrie M. Osborne, I had the opportunity to 'close the loop' in terms of delivering a negative with the imagery that Peter and I had in mind from the beginning."

The digital-timing facility was purpose-built by Peter Doyle and

PostHouse AG, a digital grading and visual-effects house based in Germany. The software, provided by the Hungarian company ColorFront, was custom-designed for the project; it has since been further developed and launched on the general market as 5D Colossus. Doyle has previously timed sequences in films such as *Dark City* and *The Matrix*. Lesnie says Doyle's "intimate knowledge of film stocks and labs, as well as his aesthetic sensibilities, made him ideal for this project."

The digital timing gave Lesnie the opportunity to delve into fragile parts of the color spectrum, such as the lavender-blues in the Lothlórien scenes, the blue-greens used in the Weathertop sequences and the magenta-salmons in Rivendell. "I wanted to see how this technology would allow me to create a series of unique looks for the film's diverse settings. What I enjoy about the digital system is that part of the keyboard



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is solely devoted to primary and secondary colors, much like a Hazeltine or Colormaster, with RGB/CYM numbers registering every change and the punch of a button serving as the equivalent to one trim at the lab." With Jackson and Osborne's support, Lesnie was able to ensure that the production's laboratory, The Film Unit, and head timer Lyn Seaman remained an integral part of the digital-timing process.

The release prints are on standard Fuji print stock, because Lesnie believes that "the combination of Kodak negative and Fuji print stock has a slightly softer quality. To achieve the desired effect, we did tests taking the prints right through the process with The Film Unit and Deluxe in Los Angeles."

Lesnie sums up his work on the project by saying, "This film has been a huge learning curve for me. From the conceptual lighting at Weta Digital to sitting in with composer

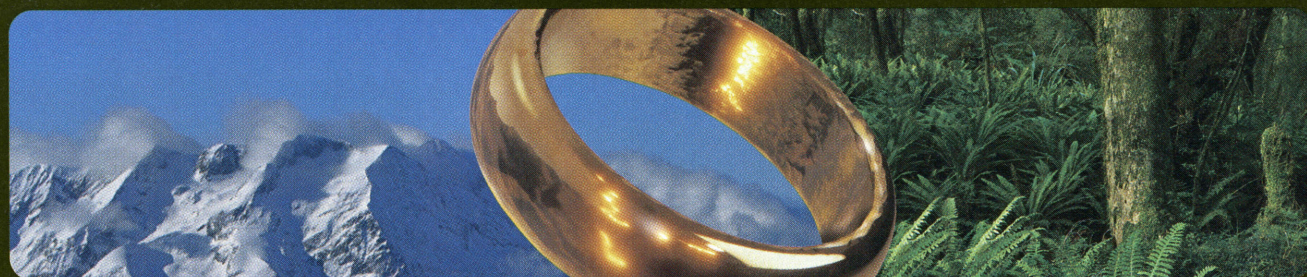


As this photo reveals, the crew's own quest occasionally rivaled that of the film's fictional characters.

Howard Shore while he conducted the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, I have been privileged to take part in a project that involved up to 2,500 passionate and dedicated people. Working with Peter was a very enjoyable experience; he has a commitment to strong performances and runs an energetic and good-humored set. I was constantly

amazed at his ability to keep a solid focus on so many aspects of the project at any one time. The story of honest people who, through the power of loyal friendship and individual courage, find the resolve to take on the forces of darkness is very much a relevant tale in the modern age." ■

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Lord of the Realm



Director Peter Jackson takes on the daunting challenge of bringing J.R.R. Tolkien's *Rings* trilogy to life on the big screen.

Interview by Ron Magid
Edited by Stephen Pizzello

Unit photography by Pierre Vinet

Within the film industry, there's a tendency to compare Peter Jackson to George Lucas. Both began as experimental filmmakers, both have created entire worlds populated with outrageous characters, both launched their own effects houses, and both have even made nostalgic films set in the '50s about their respective countries.

Of course, Jackson's previous films aren't what most people this side of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* would call family fare. His early works, such as *Meet The Feebles* and *Brain Dead*, dealt with disturbing, sometimes disgusting material, never fearing bad taste if there was a good laugh to be had. Then he made *Heavenly Creatures*, the tragic true story of a female friendship gone horribly awry, startling critics who had pigeonholed him as New Zealand's Sam Raimi. Jackson subsequently returned to macabre territory with *The Frighteners*, a supernatural comedy-thriller overflowing with ghosts, and he is now ready to unleash his own fantasy trilogy, beginning with *Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*.

Finding a cinematographer to film the trilogy, whose installments were shot over 15 months of principal photography, was one of the initial hurdles Jackson faced. He

eventually selected Andrew Lesnie, ACS, whose credits included the beloved farmyard fantasy *Babe* and its sequel, *Babe: Pig in the City*.

Despite his hectic schedule, Jackson took the time to speak to *AC* contributing editor Ron Magid about the many challenges involved in directing *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

American Cinematographer:

What convinced you that Andrew Lesnie was the right cinematographer for the *Rings* trilogy?

Peter Jackson: I spent some time trying to decide who I'd like to use, and the irony is that Andrew was one of my very early choices. He was unavailable at first, so we met with several other cinematographers. We eventually heard through the grapevine that Andrew was available, which was a stroke of immense luck for us, and we flew him over to New Zealand.

I love the photography Andrew did on the *Babe* films. I like the heightened feel, the saturation and the colors, and I love his use of natural light to create amazing bits of backlight, which I always find to be a very effective look. The *Babe* films also use a lot of wide-angle shots, which I tend to favor. I didn't necessarily want the exact look of the *Babe* films for our movie, but I

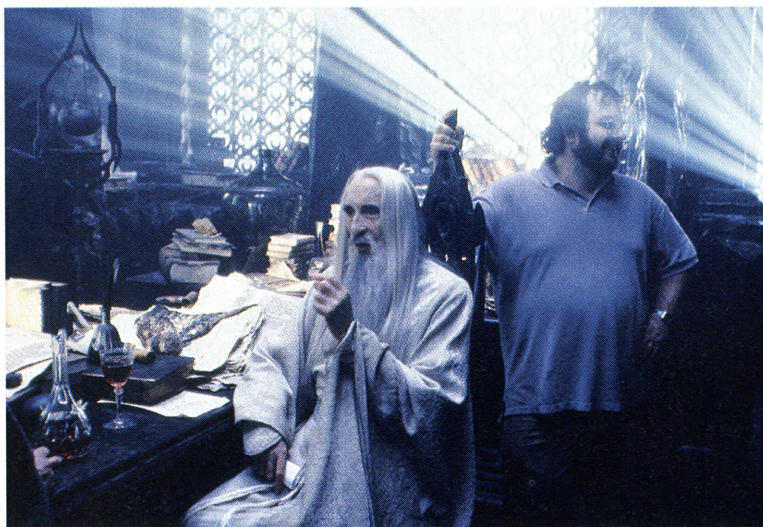
liked their stylization.

We also looked at other examples of Andrew's work. He'd shot a film in China called *Temptation of a Monk* [a.k.a. *You Seng*], and while it too was stylistically very different from what I was imagining, I saw some interesting things in it. I liked his use of natural light and his compositions.

After watching these films, I felt that Andrew had a very good eye and I felt comfortable with his photographic sensibilities. I just wanted to make sure I chose the right person before I committed to 15 months of working with a cameraman with whom I'd never worked before.

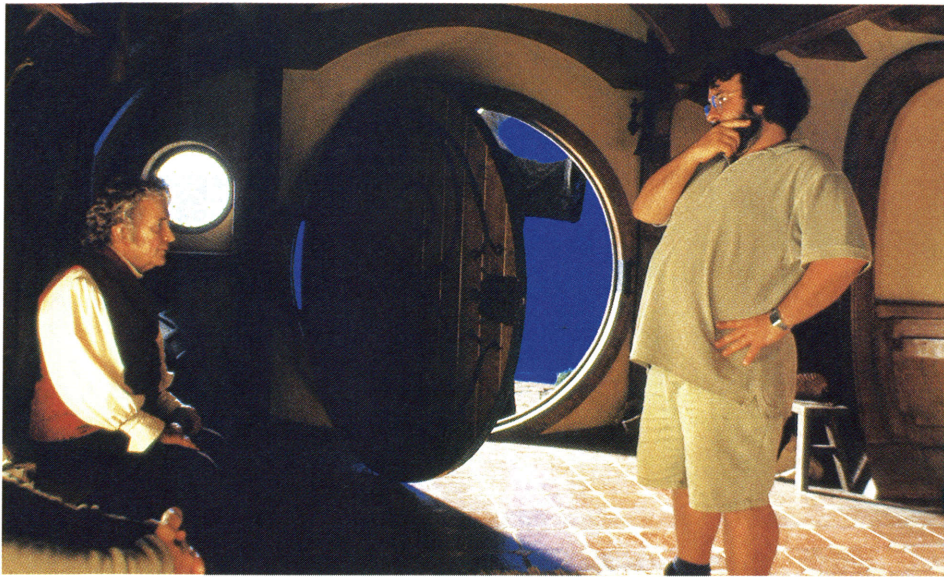
Had anything you'd done previously prepared you for a 15-month shoot?

Jackson: No. You normally shoot principal photography for 12 to 16 weeks, so *Rings* really became an endurance test. However, working that way did have its advantages. Our team had wonderful spirit because many of them had never previously committed to such a long-term project. Everybody was there not because it was just a gig, but because he or she had made a very carefully considered, conscious decision to be a part of it. It wasn't a light decision for either the cast or the crew, because everyone had to



Opposite: Jackson finds a ray of inspiration in a set depicting a chamber within the Mines of Moria. **This page:** Jackson prepares for a scene with actor and fellow Tolkien fanatic Christopher Lee, who plays the powerful wizard Saruman the White.

Lord of the Realm



Above: Contrary to Tolkien's description of a Hobbit hole as a cozy and comfortable place, the cast and crew found the low-ceilinged home of Bilbo Baggins (played by Ian Holm) to be hot and cramped. Right: Jackson gives the able Holm some guidance.



relocate to New Zealand for a long period of time.

Shooting this trilogy was really a case of taking one element at a time, doing what we needed to do, and then moving on to the next. From a psychological standpoint, none of us really focused or dwelt too much on the overall size of the project because it was a fairly daunting prospect. The collective sense of enthusiasm and excitement carried us through it very well.

You were well into preproduction before Lesnie joined you. How did he contribute to your vision for the trilogy?

Jackson: We were prepping three films simultaneously, so we did

have more work than usual done by the time we looked around for a cinematographer. After Andrew got involved, some of our plans changed a lot. I like being a collaborative person, and I regarded Andrew as my closest collaborator. I'd walk on set with an idea, but as soon as we began blocking the scene with the actors, we'd open things up and have them suggest ideas. Naturally, that process began to affect our original plans for the scene.

Meanwhile, I'd begin thinking of ways to shoot the performances, and about how I was going to cut things together to get the drama, and I'd start to lose my sense of how to compose the image! I relied very

much upon Andrew to think of ways to frame shots, and he always found interesting things to put in the foreground to establish the image. I tend to favor wide lenses rather than long lenses, and I also relied on Andrew to keep that tendency in check; he occasionally suggested a slightly longer lens to make the scene more attractive or to make the actors look better. Andrew and I always tried to give the actors as much flexibility as we could.

Sometimes you had as many as nine units working simultaneously. How did you manage that?

Jackson: The reality was that I couldn't direct everything. It was a practical consideration we just couldn't escape — otherwise, we'd still be shooting the film! Making a film of this size is like running a war. It's picking the right people and just making sure that those lines of communication are as clear as they can possibly be.

We had satellite feeds linked up to wherever the other units were — sometimes hundreds of miles away — and I'd be sitting on the set with a bank of TV screens in front of me that would usually show us what was happening with two of the other units. John Mahaffie and Geoff Murphy were directing the two principal second units, and most of the time I just kept an eye on what they were doing rather than trying to direct all three units at the same time. The trick for me was to simply let them direct, because the more I took away from them the more it took away from the job I was doing. John and Geoff would call me if they had a question, and I'd be totally aware of what they were talking about because it was on the screen in front of me. Some days it was tough, though.

How did you and Lesnie maintain visual continuity on the sequences you didn't direct and shoot?

Jackson: That involved a lot of

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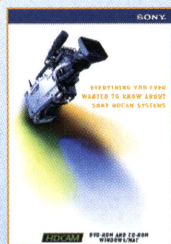
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Lord of the Realm



Jackson prepares to unleash Lurtz, an Uruk-Hai warrior bred by Saruman.

meetings, and Andrew was involved in the lighting of every single scene, regardless of whether he was actually on a given set. He talked to the other cinematographers and looked at the dailies. On some days when we had four or five units shooting, we'd have five hours of stuff to watch when we finished shooting at the end of the day! Watching dailies was like watching *Ben Hur* or *Gone With the Wind*! If everyone was in town, then dailies were an opportunity for all of us to watch each other's shots and talk about them. If the cinematographers weren't in town, Andrew would phone them, talk about what they'd done that day and discuss ideas for the following day. He always kept a finger on the pulse.

It's been said that you never want the camera to sit still.

Jackson: It's based on a very simple principle of mine: the camera is another character in the scene. Just as an actor can express emotion, I strongly believe that moving the camera around enhances the emotion of a scene. The camera can also convey an attitude to the audience that is independent of the attitude coming from the characters, and sometimes it's interesting to use that perspective to give the audience

a point of view that the characters aren't aware of themselves. Also, I believe that if you move the camera sensibly, it draws the audience into the film a bit more. They're not just being asked to interpret a series of static shots all by themselves; the camera is doing some of the interpretation for them, which provides a more gentle, comfortable ride through the movie.

Did your highly mobile camera create problems in terms of the rigging on set?

Jackson: Andrew was incredibly flexible, and I think he learned very quickly about what he was dealing with in working with me! Even though the storyboards or our discussion may have indicated the scene was going to be covered in a particular way, I think Andrew knew it was likely to change somehow on the day. That allowed him and his gaffer, Brian Mansgrove, to pre-rig and pre-light sets to allow for lots of flexibility. They could create lots of different looks within the same set.

Why did you shoot even simple dialogue scenes with multiple cameras?

Jackson: I've never really used multiple cameras that much before. I've always imagined the coverage

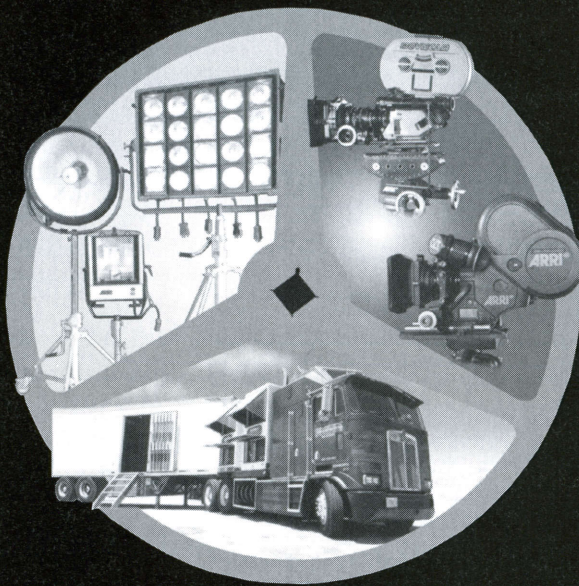
shot by shot, so this was really the first time I got my head around multiple cameras. We ultimately used them for speed, because if you can design a two-shot and a single within the same setup, you'll usually get through your day's work twice as fast. We had a lot to shoot, and using multiple cameras became a very good way to get through the day a bit faster.

What I came to enjoy about that approach is that even though the coverage of a particular scene might have indicated just one camera, I could look around for other possibilities where the second camera could be used. I began using the second camera to grab shots that I wouldn't otherwise have even thought about getting. I could also film inserts of actor's hands picking up a teacup or get tighter shots of their faces or eyes while the main footage was being shot.

Why did you shoot in the Super 35 format?

Jackson: I like the 2:35:1 anamorphic frame; I enjoy its proportions. It becomes a choice of whether to shoot with Panavision anamorphic lenses or with Super 35 sphericals and squeeze the footage later. *Heavenly Creatures* and *The Frighteners* were both shot in Super 35 simply because the rental companies in New Zealand are primarily Arriflex-based and we didn't have any Panavision gear at our disposal. In working that way, though, I came to like Super 35. I like not having to think about anamorphic lenses, and I like the little bit of extra headroom at the top and bottom of the frame, which enables you to be a bit more flexible when you do your video transfer. Even though Panavision equipment would have been available for *Lord of the Rings*, Andrew and I both felt we should stick with Super 35. Also, the visual effects that Weta artists have done on my films have all been done with Super 35 neg, so we felt it was probably wise to

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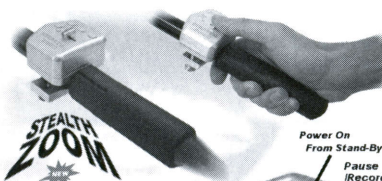
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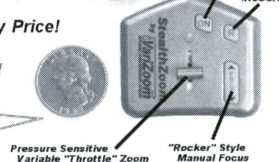
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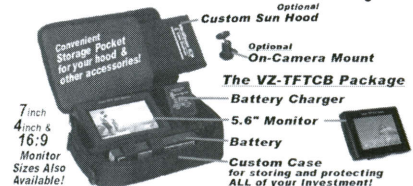
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Lord of the Realm

stick with something we knew.

What was the hardest set to work in photographically?

Jackson: The toughest but ultimately the most satisfying set was Bag End, the home of Bilbo Baggins, because we were shooting different scales. We had major dialogue scenes between Gandalf and either Bilbo or Frodo, and in both of those situations Bilbo and Frodo had to appear to be 4 feet tall while Gandalf had to appear to be 6 feet. In order to accomplish that illusion, we used either bluescreen or a variety of complicated rigs. Some of the shots involved moving forced perspective on platforms that were slaved by computers [to the camera]; when the camera moved, the platform with the actor on it would move as well to stay in perspective.

We also built two different scale sets. In the first, a normal person would look like a Hobbit

because the doors were a couple of sizes too big and the ceilings were a good height. In the second set, which was much smaller, Ian McKellen, who was playing Gandalf, was in danger of banging his head on the ceiling, and the doorways were all so small that he had to crouch to go through them. Unfortunately, once we had 20 or 30 crewmembers lugging gear around in this tiny set, many, many people banged their heads on the ceilings! We also got sore backs because we were always crouching in there for hours at a time. It was a bit like being inside a submarine, and the lights would heat the space up very, very quickly — it would become like a little sauna bath. But that set provided some of my favorite scenes. It was worth the effort.

Did you and Lesnie come up with a signature look for each location?

Jackson: We did a color plan

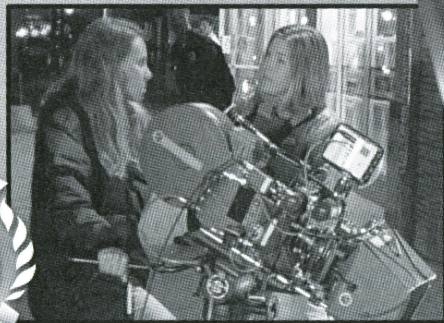
for the movie, and we were very careful with our design and our costumes. Ultimately, most of the film has been digitally graded to achieve certain moods and feelings with color. For instance, the early scenes in Bag End have a very comfortable yellow-orange glow from the roaring fireplace, a look that creates off a very cozy, at-home feeling. A little later, though, the Hobbits go to Bree, which is a very oppressive, sinister village that's full of Men. The Hobbits feel very intimidated there, so we gave our pub set a rough, rather frightening feeling by making the color of the fire a dirty, nasty greenish-yellow. So even though [both settings are] essentially lit by a fireplace, they have completely different moods and feelings.

We wanted to give the scenes with the Elves a feeling of melancholy, because this wonderful race of people is now leaving Middle-Earth,

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never to return again. Rivendell therefore has very autumnal colors, as if the Elves are in the autumn of their years. However, we wanted our other Elven location, Lothlorien, to feel very different than Rivendell. We took our cue for the lighting of Lorien from Tolkien: the Elves worship the light from the stars, so we lit Lorien with very beautiful blues and clean white colors. Their lamps emit a pure white light instead of the orange light of normal oil-burning lamps, so Lothlorien has a very pure feeling.

The Moria Mines were a very difficult lighting challenge for Andrew, because the Fellowship is essentially walking through tunnels from one side of the mountain to the other for four days. There's no natural light and it's totally pitch black, but we obviously had to have some ambience in there. We wanted the lighting to feel realistic, as if there were no sources other than

Gandalf's staff, which occasionally lights the way. We decided on a very muted green tone that we thought would give Moria the feeling of a tomb — which it essentially is, because the Dwarven civilization there has long since been destroyed. We liked the way that the slightly green ambience actually sucked the warmth out of the actors' flesh so that they began appearing very corpse-like.

How did the digital timing help create distinct looks for each locale in Middle-Earth?

Jackson: The wonderful advantage of digital grading, which we did with timer Peter Doyle and PostHouse AG, is that it can go beyond what film grading can do: you can adjust gamma and contrast, but you can also vignette and isolate pieces of a shot. It's similar to film grading in terms of basic color manipulation, but you can also take a scene that was shot on a very dull,

overcast day and increase the contrast, burn the highlights out, thicken the blacks and add warmth to the highlights without adding any warmth to the shadows. In short, you can subtly make a dull, overcast scene look as though it was shot on a bright, sunny day. We could also isolate characters and apply a Pro-Mist filter to the Elvish skintones so that they'd radiate a slight glow without affecting the rest of the shot. Digital grading allows you to apply a remarkable layer of creativity to the film after you've shot it.

Andrew and I didn't want anything to feel artificial; we wanted to make the film feel like a 'real fairy tale' rather than real life as we know it. We wanted to give the trilogy a feeling of antiquity, a slightly fantastic feel, while also making it feel real. ■



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Imagining Middle- Earth

Bringing J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* to the screen was almost as perilous a saga as Frodo's journey into Mordor. New Zealand director Peter Jackson, whose oeuvre ranges from the disturbing drama *Heavenly Creatures* to the zombie comedy *Dead Alive*, says he began to contemplate the enormity of the task after New Line gave him the green light to make the trilogy. "We had developed the project as two movies for Miramax, but they put it into turnaround because they wanted to reduce it to a single film, and we didn't," explains Jackson. "So we met with Bob Shaye, [then-president] of New Line, who suggested that we should make three films since there were three books. Up to that point, we weren't even thinking about what it would take to make these films; we were just desperate to save the project. Our sheer joy at realizing the project was going to survive, and that we'd get to do it, was the dominant

A top-notch team of visual-effects experts ventures into a fantastic realm on *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

by Ron Magid

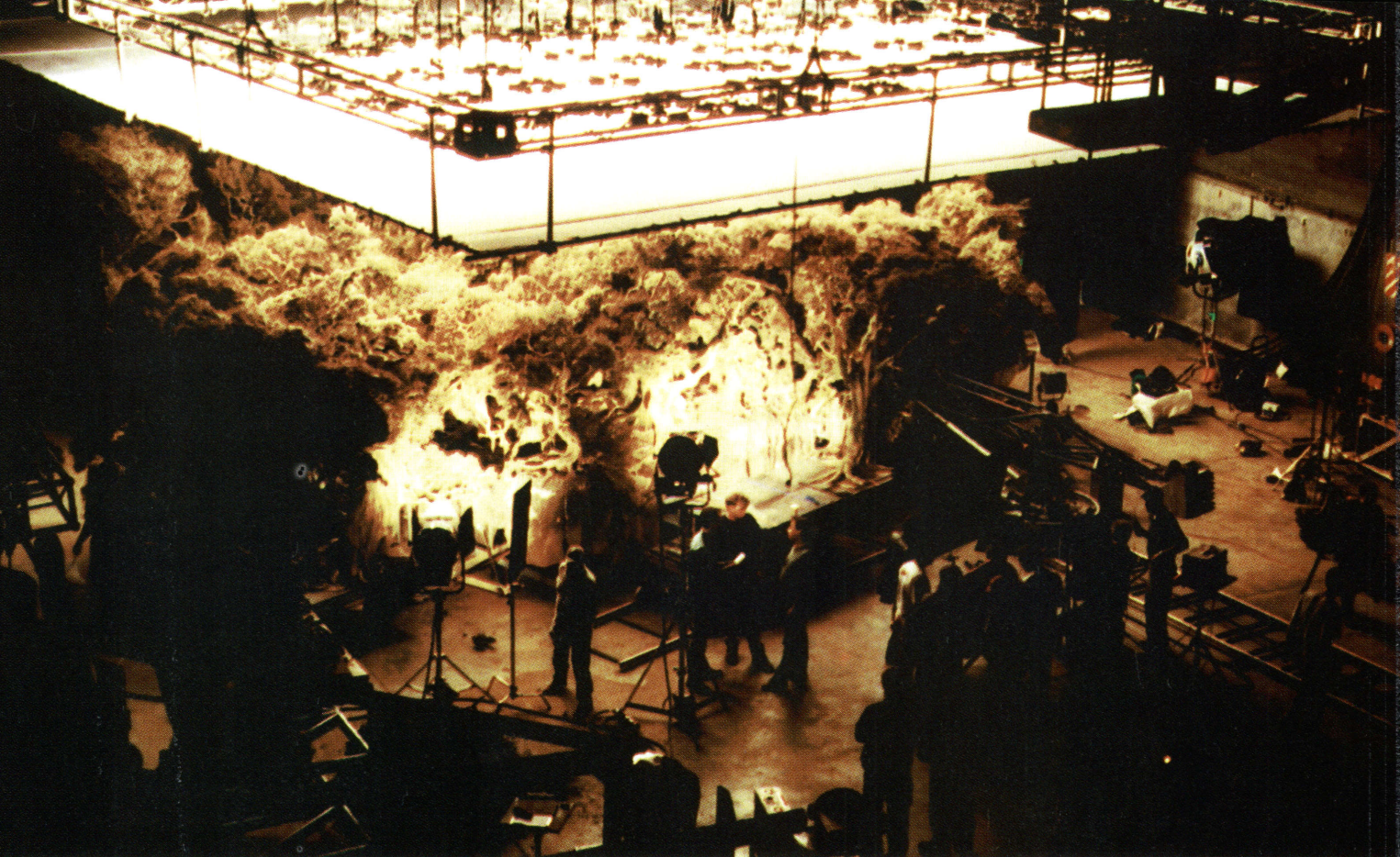
Unit photography by Pierre Vinet

feeling. It wasn't until later that the reality of what we'd actually gotten ourselves into sunk in!"

Although visualizing Tolkien's Middle-Earth was an incredibly daunting task, it had been an ongoing project for a variety of artists since the novels were first published. "The advantage with Tolkien is that his works have had a 40-year life, and a lot of people have designed things for calendars and book covers, including Tolkien himself," Jackson says. "The first thing we did was to collect all of the artwork that existed. We were very taken with two artists in particular: Alan Lee, who'd made a

beautiful set of 50 watercolor paintings for an edition of the trilogy about 10 years ago, and John Howe, who'd designed a lot of book covers. Both of those artists really inspired us, and we were writing the screenplay with their pictures spread out on the floor. They not only captured the flavor of the book, but they also drew things that went beyond what we could imagine ourselves."

Jackson subsequently hired Howe and Lee to serve as conceptual artists on the project. As the design process began, Jackson decided that he wanted to avoid the "softness" associated with digital effects and



instead create Middle-Earth for real. Going against the trend of combining 3-D computer-generated environments with digital matte paintings, Jackson decided to build the world of his film photographically — using digital techniques to hide the seams — and to create characters that were beyond the technology of makeup or creature effects. “We wanted to create a feeling that we’d gone to Middle-Earth and were able to shoot on authentic locations,” he says. “We wanted the castles to appear as though they’d been designed by a particular culture to fit in the landscape. The mantra of our design work became ‘Make it real.’”

To accomplish his goal, Jackson asked his own effects company, Weta Workshop (whose credits include Jackson’s *The Frighteners*), to oversee five key departments. Weta co-founders Richard Taylor and Tania Rodger supervised the work. Says Taylor, “We chose to look after the design, the fabrication and the on-set operation of the special makeup effects and

prosthetics, the armor, the weapons, the creatures and the miniatures because of our absolute belief that we needed to bring a singular Tolkienist brushstroke, a singular stamp of technique, style and design to the work. Over the first few years we produced literally thousands of drawings and 3-D maquettes.

“There has been an overriding disbelief that a single workshop could look after so many departments,” he continues. “For the four years of production, I wore a radio telephone that had an earpiece and a mouthpiece. I could be talking to a group of people while other information was coming through the earpiece, and I could hold other meetings using the ‘yes’ and ‘no’ button on the RT. It really freed up communication and doubled the work capacity. Otherwise we would’ve had to scatter the departments around the world, which would have dissipated the singular visions of Tolkien, of Peter and of our collective design force here at the workshop. It was a scary thing to

stand up for, but I’m glad we did it, because there is a strong, unifying aesthetic through all of the work.”

Meanwhile, New Line set up a production company, Three Foot Six (which is, incidentally, the height of a Hobbit) to oversee the complex production and postproduction of the trilogy. Under that banner, Jackson assembled an international team which included some of the greatest talents in visual effects. The participating Americans included Mark Stetson (*The Fifth Element*) and Jim Rygiel (*102 Dalmatians*) as visual-effects supervisors; Ellen Somers (*What Dreams May Come*) and Eileen Moran (*Fight Club*) as visual-effects producers; Randall William Cook (*The Gate*) as creature-animation supervisor; and Alex Funke (*Total Recall*), David Hardberger (*Dinosaur*), Chuck Schumann (*Terminator 2*) and Richard Bluck (*The Frighteners*) as visual-effects cinematographers. The team rapidly expanded to include about 200 other artists from America, New Zealand, England and

The crew works out a scene on a forest “miniature” that measured 32’ x 65’. The lighting rig consisted of 220 6K space lights aimed through light silk and patched through a dimmer board; shafts of background light were provided by six 4K Xenons.

Imagining Middle-Earth



Aragorn battles Black Riders at Weathertop. Unfortunately, Frodo has already been cut and infected by the deadly poison in one of their daggers.

Germany, and it came to include Hollywood effects powerhouse Digital Domain as well.

"[The New Zealand] film industry only goes back 20 or 25 years, so we just didn't have the skills base we needed to tackle something of this size," Taylor states frankly. "Although the backbone of the production is definitely New Zealanders, very clever individuals were brought in to assist in areas where we had less experience."

Chief among them was Rygiel, who was hired after Stetson departed the project after principal photography had wrapped. Rygiel oversaw the creation of digital effects and the compositing of miniatures with live-action and digital characters. "In terms of putting all of the elements together, the show was not yet on track when I came on," Rygiel explains. "They were just finishing principal photography, and Mark had been [supervising] shooting bluescreen elements and lots of miniatures. I think they brought me

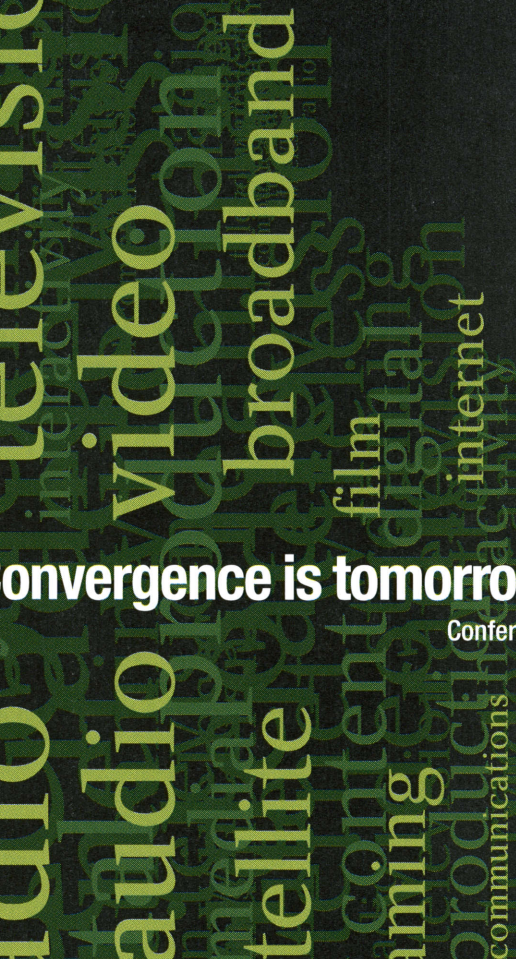
in was because the show was heading into the heavy digital stage of things, and my background includes a broad mix of digital and practical. I think we're up to 450 shots in just *The Fellowship of the Ring*, and I was told that that particular film would be the lesser show in terms of effects! The first film has more of a potpourri of effects because it has to introduce audiences to all of the different people and lands."

A blend of ancient trickery and bleeding-edge digital techniques was needed to transform actors Ian Holm, Elijah Wood, Sean Astin, Dominic Monaghan and Billy Boyd into, respectively, the Hobbits Bilbo, Frodo, Sam Gamgee, Merry and Pippin. "[Casting actors of normal height] created a lot of problems, but it's also one of the most remarkable aspects of the movie," says Jackson. "Tolkien described Hobbits as being small people with large, hairy feet, so I don't think little people were what he actually had in mind."

Visual effects cinematogra-

pher Brian Van't Hul devised the majority of techniques to translate the full-size cast into 3'6" Hobbits. "Brian set up a lot of the scaled Hobbit-move and motion-control mechanics," says Rygiel. "Sixty to seventy percent of those shots were done in camera and the rest were bluescreen composites. Sometimes we just had giant sets of legs puppeteered past the actors playing the Hobbits to make them appear small. We also used forced perspective to create shots like the one where Bilbo serves tea to Gandalf. It appears as though Bilbo is right across from Gandalf, but he was actually 30 feet behind him; because it's all set up from the same viewpoint in relation to camera, Bilbo just looks smaller."

"Whenever we had the Hobbits cross over from the foreground to the background, we used two different lenses — one for the big people, one for the Hobbits — and shot them on bluescreen, then comped them together," Rygiel continues. "Those were tricky to set



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The logo for NAB 2002 features the letters 'NAB' in a large, bold, white sans-serif font. The letter 'A' is stylized with several white diagonal lines of varying lengths extending from its top-left corner. To the right of 'NAB' is the year '2002' in a large, yellow, cursive script font. Below 'NAB' and to the left of '2002' is the text 'The Convergence Marketplace' in a white sans-serif font, with 'The' on the first line and 'Convergence Marketplace' on the second line. A thick, yellow, curved line sweeps from the bottom left, under 'The Convergence Marketplace', and curves upwards towards the '2002' text.

Imagining Middle-Earth

Right: A horde of Orcs charges into battle. Weta's creature shop created about 1,800 Orc suits with matching foam latex and silicon makeup and heavy armaments, but the Orc forces envisioned by Jackson were impossible to forge from human actors in costume alone. Teeming masses of Orcs were created at Weta with the help of Massive, a program developed by Stephen Regelous which uses motion capture to create cycles that it can then multiply into armies of thousands.

Below: A makeup artist primps one of the evil creatures.



up, because if we did a push-in with one lens on the normal-size character, we'd have to change the lens to make the actors playing the Hobbits appear smaller, but we'd want the tables and the chairs to match up, as well as the two camera moves. So when we shot the Hobbits, we'd have them on a tricky sliding platform with an oversized chair, and we'd actually move the platform in rela-

tion to camera to take out any parallax from the different lens and larger camera move involved. That way, we could actually scale the move by sliding the Hobbit forward as the camera moved in. It's an interesting mix of techniques that works flawlessly."

In creating Middle-Earth, Jackson was determined to use real photography instead of CG whenever possible, even if that

meant real photography of miniatures. "Computers are a wonderful tool for enhancing things, but I think shooting models is one of the great joys," the director says. "If I were to have another career, I'd want to build models for films. I love using them and seeing them come together. We had Richard Taylor and his team at Weta build 60 or more fairly large miniatures for all three movies. Then Alex Funke, our miniatures director of photography, and I could go over the miniatures with a video camera and plot our camera moves. Once the model is standing there in the room, you see angles and great shots that you never even knew about in the early storyboarding stage. It's like going to a location, and I love the physicality of it. It opens the door to a whole new range of ideas."

In fact, Weta artists built 68 vast miniature environments that collectively gave Jackson's Middle-Earth its scope. "We coined the phrase 'bigatures' because most of

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Imagining Middle-Earth

Crew members use a ritter fan to create the illusion of a snowstorm in a soundstage.



them were massive miniatures,” Taylor says with a laugh. “Each miniature was dictated by the size of the human figure Alan Lee had drawn with the last stroke of his pen, and the environments were colossal, so we needed to build them as big as possible.

“We’ve been fairly precocious in that we’ve tried to pull off extremely small-scale miniatures for a 35mm film,” he adds. “In the first movie, places like [the Elven city of] Rivendell, [the tower of Orthanc at Saruman’s fortress] Isengard, the Mines of Moria and the Pass at Caradhras were all done using $\frac{1}{12}$ scale miniatures, or sometimes $\frac{1}{24}$ scale, although we built a huge number of settings at $\frac{1}{36}$ and $\frac{1}{72}$. Saruman’s dark tower of Barad-dûr was built at $\frac{1}{166}$ scale, and it was nearly three stories tall! Because almost every environment consisted of massive rocks and caves, we started the process by molding interesting rock faces from around the coastline of Wellington, then used a urethane spray gun to spray sheets and dangle the miniature rocks onto

massive steel frames. We’d then sculpt any detailing, take a silicon mold and spray it with rigid urethane, which allowed us to build miniatures extremely quickly on a very tight budget. We had a very small miniatures team — the primary group was about seven people — and we made 68 miniatures. Everything was built on wheels and rolled down the road to the shooting stage. We’d hold the telephone lines up to clear the models!”

Rather than creating digital backgrounds for the miniature environments, Jackson employed one of New Zealand’s finest landscape photographers, Craig Potten, who ran all over the country shooting sunrises, sunsets and other magical vistas in order to create scenic background plates. “When you read Tolkien’s books, you can almost think that the characters and story are an excuse for him to describe the landscapes, because landscapes come across very much as being his true love,” says Jackson. “We tried to create very special landscapes with the most beautiful light, because

Tolkien always described landscapes at the most beautiful time of day.”

Despite the vast number of elements involved in even the simplest establishing shot, a phenomenal amount of previsualization work, spearheaded by animation director Randy Cook from October 1998 through July 1999, helped keep everyone on the same page. Virtually the entire trilogy was laid out in rough animatics. “There were literally three hours of pre-vis for each film,” says Rygiel. “It was so good that there were times when we were trying to final a shot, and Peter would say, ‘Look at the pre-vis. That’s exactly how I want it.’”

One of the first sequences Cook previsualized was the Stairway of Khazad-Dûm, where the Fellowship nearly meets its end amid a swarm of murderous Orcs. “Peter and I worked very closely to choose camera angles and choreograph the chase down the stairs, which became a rather elaborate, 140-shot Puppetoon staged entirely with CG characters and CG sets,” Cook recalls. “Peter cut that down to 80 shots, and

then the second-unit director, who shot the live-action elements, followed it. The final sequence is extraordinarily close to the pre-vis as far as composition, pace and cutting, even down to the rudimentary gestures I gave the little figures. It was great to block out a big adventure sequence right off the bat."

The Khazad-Dum stairway setpiece, leading into a fight in the Great Hall and the mine shafts at Moria, was a massive sequence that took almost a year to shoot, and it perfectly encapsulates the problems of combining live action and miniature environments. Miniatures cinematographers Funke, Bluck, Hardberger and Schumann created epic imagery that perfectly matched the live photography by Andrew Lesnie, ACS. "They're essentially spiraling down through the mines along very precarious walkways that the Orcs have carved over the centuries, and they're looking up a huge shaft that stretches away into the dark," says Funke. "It's lit only by Gandalf's staff, so we had the classic problem of shooting something that's supposed to be in total darkness. The members of the Fellowship were either shot against bluescreen or, depending on how close they were, rendered as good digital doubles."

Meanwhile, the hordes of hobgoblin-like hellspawn called Orcs were required to swarm over the fellowship — a tall order. Although Weta's creature shop created about 1,800 Orc suits with matching foam latex and silicon makeup and heavy armaments, the Orc forces envisioned by Jackson were impossible to forge from human actors in costume alone. But swarm they do, thanks to a program developed at Weta by Stephen Regelous called Massive, which uses motion capture to create cycles that it can multiply into armies of thousands. "You can say, 'I want my Orcs to charge the humans,' and once they start clashing, if an Orc

stabs a man, he actually falls over and dies," says Cook. "It took a lot of work to get this system set up, but nowhere near as much as it would have if we'd had to animate 10,000 guys warring."

"It's artificial intelligence for sure — or maybe artificial stupidity when it comes to Orcs," Cook adds with a chuckle. "The Orcs have an extremely complex library of movements, captured in a series of short bites, and then one bite can be blended into any of the others to create distinct actions. We also did keyframe animation of horses and crows, then fed the motion through Massive to make great flocks running around. The Massive shots take from days to weeks to build, depending on how much finessing is involved, and it took a while to render thousands of warriors at high resolution. But I can take very few bows for anything Massive does, because it works very well indeed on its own."

While things were advancing apace on the digital front, the art of shooting miniatures received a huge boost from a series of innovations, which ranged from homemade motion-control technology to a new way of creating flickering firelight. "The Kiwis are very proud of what they call Number 8 technology," Funke observes. "Number 8 iron wire is used for everything, so if you can't fix something with that, you can't fix it. Visual effects is all Number 8 technology, and we've made some amazing jumps on this project. Our brilliant electronics engineer, Chris Davidson, built the best smoke controller ever, finally taming the art of controlling smoke density in miniatures. We've tried to use infrared in the past, but unfortunately, the smoke readers work differently on damp days than on dry days. Instead, Chris shot a beam of very low-level red light into a Scotchlight reflector, which sent it back to a sensor to determine the exact density of smoke in the room and keep that density constant.



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Imagining Middle-Earth

"Next, Chris designed an interface for the motion control to drive a normal dimmer desk to control lights that need to be dimmed or flickered in miniature sets. Before, we'd attach a motor to a variable transformer to make a single light flicker, but how many variable transformers can you use? To create the effect of a bonfire burning in a cave, you need two lights flickering independently to simulate the randomness of flame, but if you've got 40 furnaces burning, each with two lights, you need 40 channels flickering differently. Chris's system used a 120-channel dimmer desk, and we could put each of those lamps on its own channel, which was controlled electronically from the motion controller. We had 250 steps of dimming that were completely electronic. It's just so handy, especially if you're doing any flame effects that have to flicker very slowly

because of the motion-control speeds at which you're shooting.

"Lastly, Brian Van't Hul, who's also an effects cinematographer, designed an amazing jump forward in video-assist technology," Funke continues. "It has a complete workstation to do mattings, splits and wipes, do pre-comps, play shots backward or forward, run them at different speeds to see what they'd look like if we shot them that way, compare takes — and it's all in one box. It's all on disk and runs on a Macintosh G4. After the first unit saw it, of course, they wanted one for themselves. Pretty soon, all of the live-action units were using them."

Van't Hul and Dominic Taylor also built two motion-control rigs after it was determined that renting commercial rigs would have blown the budget. "They built two complete rigs for what it would cost to rent a rig from the U.S. for a few months,

and they worked amazingly well," Funke says. "I put them in touch with Joe Lewis, 'Mr. Motion Control' in L.A., and Joe was very helpful in terms of loaning motors and suggesting techniques. In addition to that, we got one of Joe's rigs — a custom-built, high-speed model with an extra-long boom — to do the live-action motion-control blue-screen shooting. A lot of the other live-action motion-control shooting was done with rigs built by our mo-co grip Harry Harrison; Moritz Wassman, whose machine shop is in-house, also built two and a half more rigs. We actually had up to six rigs on the floor at one time."

But perhaps the greatest innovation was a new motion-control camera designed by Arriflex, at Funke's urging, specifically for *The Lord of the Rings*. "We started out with six Fries Mitchells plus my old Rackover, but from the very begin-

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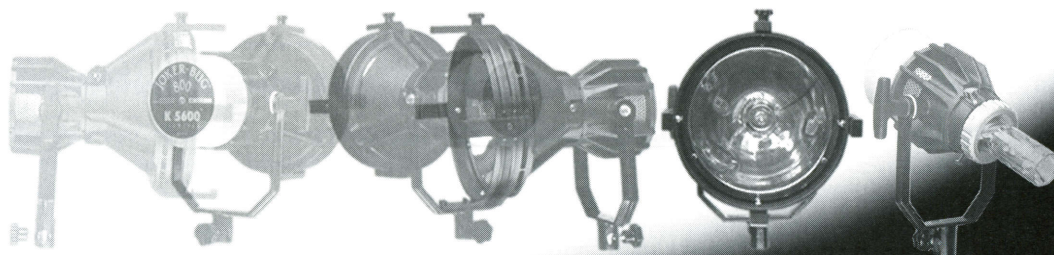
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ning we talked with Arri about making the 435B an effects-friendly camera because this is basically an all-Arri show,” Funke recalls. “The 435 is steady and has a great viewfinder and a great videotap, but it has never been possible to use it for motion control because it has two motors — one that drives the film transport and one that drives the shutter — and those simply aren’t compatible with the very slow speed necessary to shoot motion control. We in the effects business have been trying to get Arri to solve the problem for years. So, after a lot of very clever engineering, they actually solved the problem so that we can run the 435 at any speed up to 150 fps, or we can unplug the battery, plug in the motion control and shoot at 10 minutes per frame. Although the Mitchell’s shutter just barely covers the aperture, which causes light leaks around the shutter and

fogs the frame, the Arri has a built-in capping shutter that simply closes and protects the film when you’re not shooting, which saves a lot of lost frames. We have the first three of the cameras and they’re absolutely fantastic. At last, we can do miniature photography with modern cameras we can see through!

“Of course,” he adds, “the Mitchells and the Rackover were still cranking away, because we only had three Arris and we had up to eight setups running at a time.”

In the end, combining so many effects elements to create the project’s epic canvas was an amazing challenge for all involved. “What’s so different about this project is that you usually know what you’re getting into,” Rygiel says. “This is the first show I’ve worked on that had such a huge cornucopia of every sort of effect; it was a huge conglomerate of CG and practical, miniature and

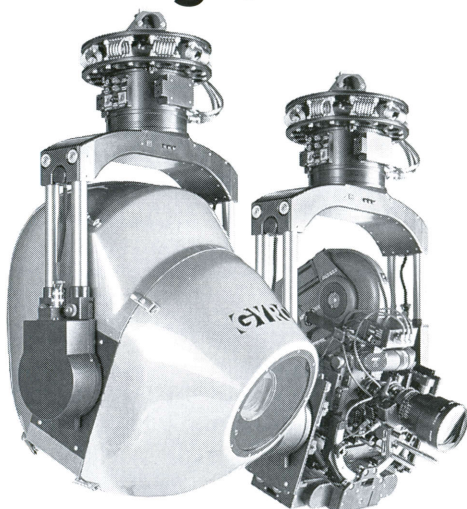
bluescreen.”

“It is daunting, and if you think about it for awhile it almost becomes quite scary,” admits Jackson, who is now finishing the trilogy’s remaining installments, *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King*. “There’s a saying in New Zealand: ‘One job at a time is a job of success.’ That became my mantra. You don’t stop and think too much about the enormity of the project; you don’t start shooting the movie and think, ‘In a year and a half, we’re still going to be shooting.’ Instead, you look at what’s happening today and tomorrow and you plan ahead for the next week. You just put your head down and get on with the job. On days when I was getting weighed down by the pressure of it all, I asked myself, ‘Is there anything else that you’d rather be doing?’ And I couldn’t come up with anything.” ■

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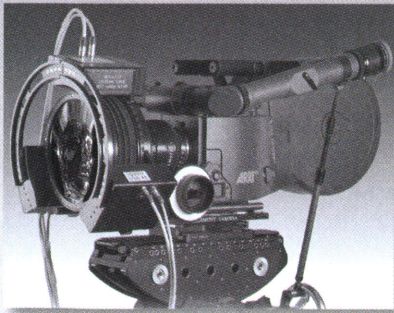
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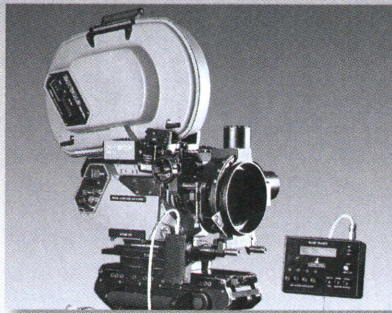
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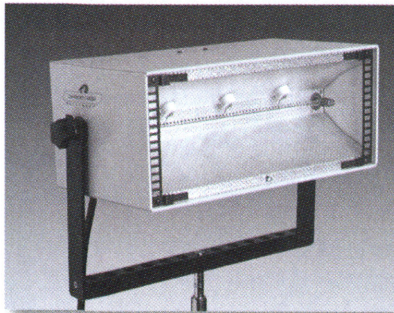
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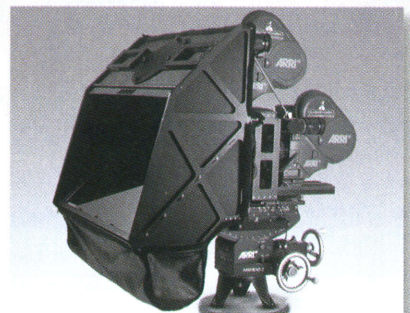
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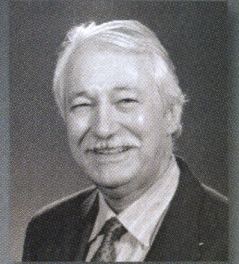


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Ripple Effect

A devastating loss casts a grieving couple into uncharted waters in the nuanced drama *In the Bedroom*, shot by Antonio Calvache and directed by Todd Field.



by Rachael K. Bosley

Portraying the buildup to and aftermath of a tragedy in a small Maine town, the new film *In the Bedroom* explores the difficult and largely interior terrain of grief, a landscape colored by shock, anger and regret. Director/co-writer Todd Field and cinematographer Antonio Calvache

say that the project's thorny subject matter was paralleled by a number of production challenges, which were motivated by the filmmakers' desire to create a naturalistic piece with economy and grace. Although Calvache and Field each brought a variety of filmmaking experiences to the table, *In the Bedroom* posed a number of "firsts" for both of them. "I think we held each other's fears in

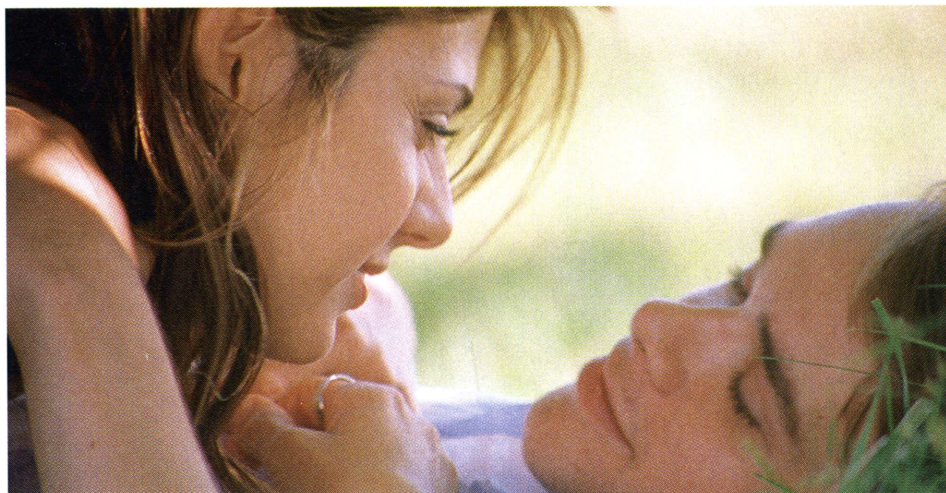
check," Field remarks, "and there was a lot to be afraid of."

In the Bedroom bears all the hallmarks of an independent film — it was financed by indie player Good Machine, won a Special Grand Jury Prize at Sundance early this year, and is being distributed by Miramax — but Field says he was determined to avoid what the label "indie film" implies. "I hate the whole idea of

justifying whether a film is good or bad based on its budget,” he says. “The last thing I want is for someone to look at this film and wonder what it cost — I want them to believe me if I say \$10 million to \$15 million, or believe me if I say \$1.5 million. I just wanted the film to be what it ought to be.”

With that in mind, Field spent three years developing “a very deliberate visual plan” for the film, and he spent two of those years discussing it with Calvache. *In the Bedroom* is actually their second professional collaboration; in 1997, Calvache shot *Broken Vessels*, which Field starred in and co-produced (see AC July ’98). “That film was shot in 18 days in a style that was very much ‘run and gun,’ and I was impressed by how Antonio kept his head and how he ran the crew,” Field recalls. “He didn’t let any of the craziness on that set affect him, and he was fearless about experimentation.”

Calvache and Field actually met several years prior to *Broken Vessels*, in the American Film Institute’s MFA program. Before moving to Los Angeles to attend AFI in 1992, Calvache had worked as director of photography on a number of documentaries, short films and telefilms in his native Spain, and he had also earned a cinematography degree from the Instituto Oficial de Radio y Television de Madrid, one of Spain’s most reputable film schools. Although he and Field never collaborated at AFI, they took note of each other’s work. “We were working on assignments given by John Alonzo [ASC], and I was working on one side of the stage while Antonio was working on the other,” Field recalls. “I watched him set up his lighting, and I found that I was a lot more interested in what he was doing than what I was doing.” Similarly, Calvache was impressed by Field’s short films, which he found “very visual and very poetic.”



One of those shorts, *Delivering*, was based on a short story by Andre Dubus, and it was while reading a collection of the writer’s works that Field was struck by another of his stories, which chronicles a long-married couple’s attempt to cope with the death of their only child. “The story is so dense, as all of his writing is, and I knew it couldn’t be treated in a short form,” Field says. “My reaction to it was purely emotional. I responded to the characters, who reminded me very much of my parents, and to the nature of their grief — it’s such a strange road, and there’s no formula for it. In order to capture that, you have to make something that’s not entirely yours; it doesn’t become anything until the audience arrives, and they have to meet you exactly halfway in order for the piece to be effective or even fully exist. That’s a scary thing to try to do, because it can be a horrible failure.”

Field teamed with screenwriter Robert Festinger to write a feature-length screenplay based on the Dubus story, which became *In the Bedroom*. The film’s narrative unfolds in a series of small-town tableaux — Little League games, backyard cookouts, and poker games with friends — as Matt and Ruth Fowler (Tom Wilkinson and Sissy Spacek) prepare to send their son Frank (Nick Stahl) off to college. Frank, however, is more interested in his budding romance

with Natalie (Marisa Tomei), a newly separated mother who is 10 years his senior. The rhythms of rural life and young love are suddenly shattered by a violent tragedy, and friends and families struggle to recover in its wake.

In the Bedroom was shot in spring 2000 at locations scattered throughout Maine, where Field has a home. When he and Calvache began discussing the project, one of their concerns was how to create a muted, desaturated palette in light of the film’s rural, sun-dappled settings. Field, a self-described avid reader of AC, had read an article in the magazine that detailed the use of the Varicon on *The Straight Story*, shot by Freddie Francis, BSC (AC Nov. ’99). “That film, like ours, had a lot of daylight exteriors, and I loved the way the Varicon desaturated everything,” Field says. “So I asked Antonio to see the film and consider it.”

Calvache says he had encountered an early version of the Varicon, which functions like an instantly variable low-contrast filter, while working in Spain. “I was initially skeptical about how such a device could add to my pictures,” he acknowledges. “I was always more interested in having the richest blacks, which never seemed rich enough on the color stocks available at that time. It wasn’t until I started working with bleach-bypass

Opposite page: Matt and Ruth Fowler (Tom Wilkinson and Sissy Spacek) share an uneasy moment as dawn breaks.

Cinematographer Antonio Calvache placed a 4K Par on scaffolding outside the window as the main source and used the white sheets as bounce to help illuminate Spacek. He also placed a 2-by-2 Kino Flo just below camera to bring out Wilkinson’s face and a 2-by-1 Kino Flo just above the frame to highlight Spacek’s eyes.

This page: Natalie (Marisa Tomei) and Frank (Nick Stahl) enjoy an idyllic afternoon. Calvache surrounded the tree close to the actors with 4’x8’ beadboards to wrap the natural light of mid-afternoon around their faces.

Ripple Effect



Natalie's ex, Richard (William Mapother), makes himself at home in her house. "It was a bit tricky to give the light a wrapping quality because there was a covered porch outside the windows," Calvache recalls. In addition to aiming HMIs through the windows, "we hid a battery of Kino Flos on the porch and hung a Kino Flo above the window behind Marisa."

processes that I thought about using the Varicon to increase the information in the shadows and compensate for the increased contrast that the silver-retention method added to color prints. But when I tested a Varicon in 1993, I found it cumbersome and frustratingly imprecise."

After he saw *The Straight Story*, Calvache decided to give the device another try. He tested a newer Varicon at Clairmont Camera and liked what he saw. "It had become much lighter and more compact; it actually fit into a regular, multi-staged 6.6"x6.6" mattebox, and I got the feeling that using it wouldn't create problems during the shoot. Its extremely sensitive light meter gave me very accurate readings of the light it was producing to create the desired low-con effect.

"To my surprise, it produced an effect in the image quite similar to that created by the Panaflasher, with which I was more familiar," he adds. "I was afraid the Varicon would wash out the blacks, but I found that if it's set at the right intensity the blacks remain deep black, and the amount of added information in the shadows is quite surprisingly high. When you

turn the Varicon on, details in dark foliage, dark hair, or in the folds of dark clothing come out of the shadows as if by magic."

Cinematographers can also achieve a heightened effect by gelling the Varicon to add hints of color to the shadows, but Calvache says he only used gels with the device "to match the color temperature of the scene being shot. Because the Varicon uses a halogen tungsten bulb, we'd gel it with CTB when shooting in daylight, and we'd add increased amounts of blue when shooting at dusk to match the increasing coldness of the ambient light. I didn't want to create a noticeable effect with it."

In the Bedroom also gave the cinematographer his first experience shooting in Super 35. Field says he had always envisioned the images in widescreen, and he and Calvache opted for Super 35 because they felt the anamorphic format's limited depth of field and requisite slower lenses would not have facilitated the naturalistic lighting and compositions they had in mind. "Many scenes in the film are played out in a single angle, and I wanted to keep both the

foreground and background sharp," Field explains. "Also, we were limited to a 30-day shoot, and we wanted to have the ease of faster spherical lenses." Calvache adds, "Todd has a strong sense of composition, and that was something we never neglected because of time constraints. His visual strategy, which avoided elaborate camera movements, helped us save time."

The filmmakers selected a Moviecam Compact for their A camera and a Moviecam SL for handheld and Steadicam work. Calvache opted for Zeiss lenses, shooting most of the film with 25mm and 50mm Superspeed lenses and 32mm and 40mm Standard lenses. "I love using the 32mm for handheld work, because I think it recreates a subjective point of view in a very natural way," he notes.

The cinematographer took advantage of about five weeks of preproduction in Maine to scout locations with Field and to test a variety of film stocks with the Varicon. To conduct the stock tests, he used his own, custom gray scale made with 15 steps of translucent ND gel, with each step featuring a difference

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Ripple Effect

The Fowlers enjoy a meal in the country with their closest friends, Willis and Katie Grinnel (William Wise and Celia Weston). The filmmakers began shooting the scene at magic hour and hung a 12'x12' double net outside the window to "bring down the information," Calvache says. The crew hung a 4-by-4 Kino Flo above the window and a 4-by-2 Kino Flo gelled with 1/4 straw in each corner behind the actors; 4'x8' bounce cards helped wrap the actors with light.



of one stop. Calvache decided to use Kodak Vision 250D 5246 for all of the day scenes; he shot at T4 or T5.6 and pull-processed that footage by one stop to further extend the latitude of the film. He used Vision 500T 5279 for night interiors and Vision 800T 5289 for night exteriors, noting that he was particularly happy with the 89. "It allows for two-thirds of an extra stop compared to the 79, and because night exteriors are generally a compromise between the scope of the shots and what a production can afford in terms of equipment and time, any extra speed in the film stock is welcome. Because of the optical step that Super 35 requires, I was concerned about the 89's increased grain, but I've found with Super 35 that when dealing with low-light conditions, having the right density in the negative is so much more important than avoiding grain by using a slower stock."

Most of the film's action unfolds in the Fowlers' home, and a suitable practical location proved difficult to find. "We started to think the house we were looking for didn't really exist," Calvache recalls with a laugh. "The main problem was that the master bedrooms in those old houses are very small and have very low ceilings. We needed a bedroom that was big enough to give us different shot possibilities, and whose ceiling was high enough to allow us to

hide lights above the frameline." The house the production finally settled on was located by Field's wife; it was built in the 1700s, and Field spent two days taking stills inside, watching the light and how it played against the hand-blown glass that highlighted several interior doors.

For the film's day interiors, Calvache created the impression of natural daylight by aiming 4K, 6K and 18K HMIs through the windows as the main source and utilizing 4'x8' bounce cards and small Kino Flo units to create fill for close-ups. "For some scenes, we had to minimize the units inside to give the actors additional room, and to leave their eyelines clear so that they could see each other during a scene." He often tucked 4-by-4 and 2-by-2 banks of Kino Flos in the corners of rooms, and he brought the units to the edge of the frame when possible to wrap the actors in a natural-looking, soft backlight. "Our primary goal was to create a sense of reality, to create a realistic portrait of real people in real locations. This approach is reflected not only in the lighting, but also in the art direction, the choice of locations, the very detailed set dressing and the subtle makeup."

Lighting and shooting the film's night exteriors was much more complicated, and Calvache says that aspect of the project especially intrigued him. The dramatic third

act unfolds entirely at night, and the climax occurs in a remote, wooded area. "Night exteriors are very demanding, and very difficult to do on such a tight schedule and small budget, but I was excited by the challenge. Todd and I started discussing how to approach the night scenes very early on. We wondered what we could bring to the scene in the forest to motivate lighting, but car headlights didn't make sense because the site was so remote, and it didn't make sense for the characters involved to carry flashlights or lamps, either. So our only realistic source was the moon.

"I didn't introduce the idea of shooting day-for-night until later into the prep, even though I'd dedicated a lot of thought to it," Calvache continues. "Day-for-night can be very scary for cinematographers because we can sometimes get cornered into doing something that won't necessarily look true. But when I saw the scope of the sequence and realized what we'd need in terms of time and equipment to shoot it night-for-night the right way, I knew it was time to suggest shooting some day-for-night."

Field says the film's financiers "were very nervous" about the day-for-night idea, and it wasn't until he and Calvache shot successful day-for-night tests in the forest on both still and motion-picture film that the

financiers approved it. When they actually filmed the sequence, the filmmakers were aided by an approaching thunderstorm. “We were actually scheduled to shoot something else that day, but as I drove to work in the morning, a big storm rolled in with incredibly thick fog,” Field recalls. “As soon as Antonio and I saw each other, we just nodded, and I said, ‘Okay, everyone, we’re going into the woods!’”

Calvache says the film’s third act actually intercuts day-for-night, dusk-for-night, dawn-for-night and night-for-night footage, and he is thrilled with the results. “I know *very* well which is which, but I don’t think audiences will notice.”

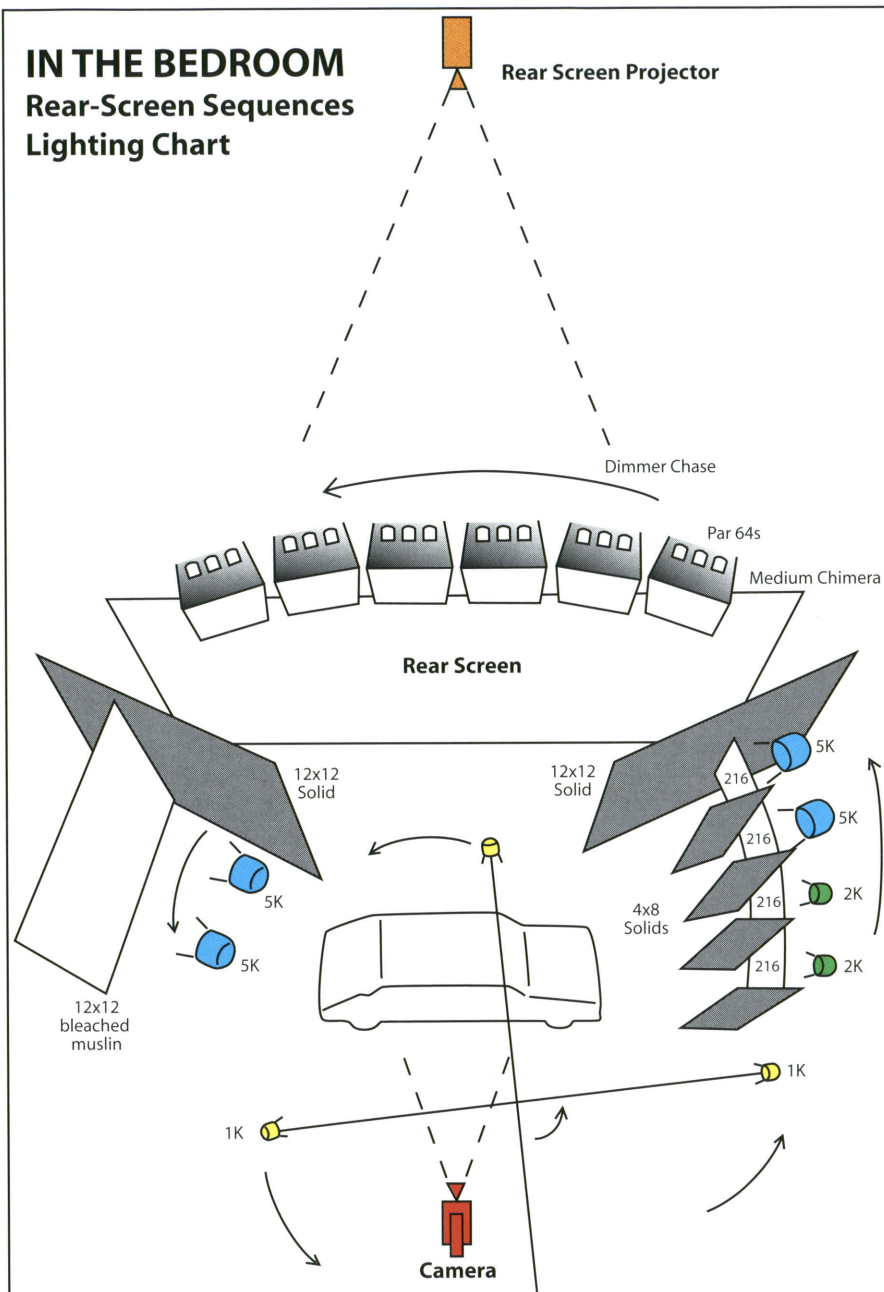
Another seamless effect in the film is the use of rear-screen projection in its numerous driving sequences, one of which is integral to the third act. Field says he had the opportunity to discuss the technique with Stanley Kubrick during production of *Eyes Wide Shut* (in which Field plays shadowy pianist Nick Nightingale). “As an actor, I’ve always been frustrated with the camera-car setup — you’re given direction over a walkie-talkie, and you can’t understand anything,” he observes. “I knew Stanley had used front- and rear-screen projection a lot, so I asked him about it. He said driving sequences should always be shot that way; you can make a point of it, like in *A Clockwork Orange*, or it can be invisible. He advised me to talk to Bill Hansard.”

William Hansard, an ASC associate member who mastered the rear-screen projection process during a lengthy career as a cameraman at Universal Studios, met with Field and explained the fundamentals of the process. “I think he thought we were crazy to hire him,” Field recalls, laughing. “He said our film was the lowest-budget film he’d ever worked on. I told him we were being pressured to shoot all of those scenes against bluescreen, and he said,

IN THE BEDROOM

Rear-Screen Sequences

Lighting Chart



All of the film’s driving scenes were shot using rear-screen projection courtesy of Hansard Enterprises; Stanley Kubrick had highly recommended the process to director Todd Field. Calvache, who had never worked with rear-screen before, designed this lighting plan for the sequences; the car was rotated to accommodate the shots. Pictured: Matt and Richard take a late-night ride.

Ripple Effect

Willis steps out to greet his visitors. Calvache backlit the mist and silhouetted the house with an 18K HMI placed behind the building, and a 2K nook light was tucked in the peak above the porch to help detail the house. Front light was provided by the arriving car's headlights and by a 4K Par on scaffolding to the left of the frame.



"There's nothing as beautiful as an in-camera optical.' And he was right."

According to Field, the only crew member on *In the Bedroom* who had prior experience with the rear-screen process was camera operator Michael Genne, who had worked with Hansard many times. "Mike was very helpful, but the rest of us were learning on the spot, and there's really no room for error with

that process," Field says. "Lighting rear-screen is very, very tricky. It will either work or it will look terrible."

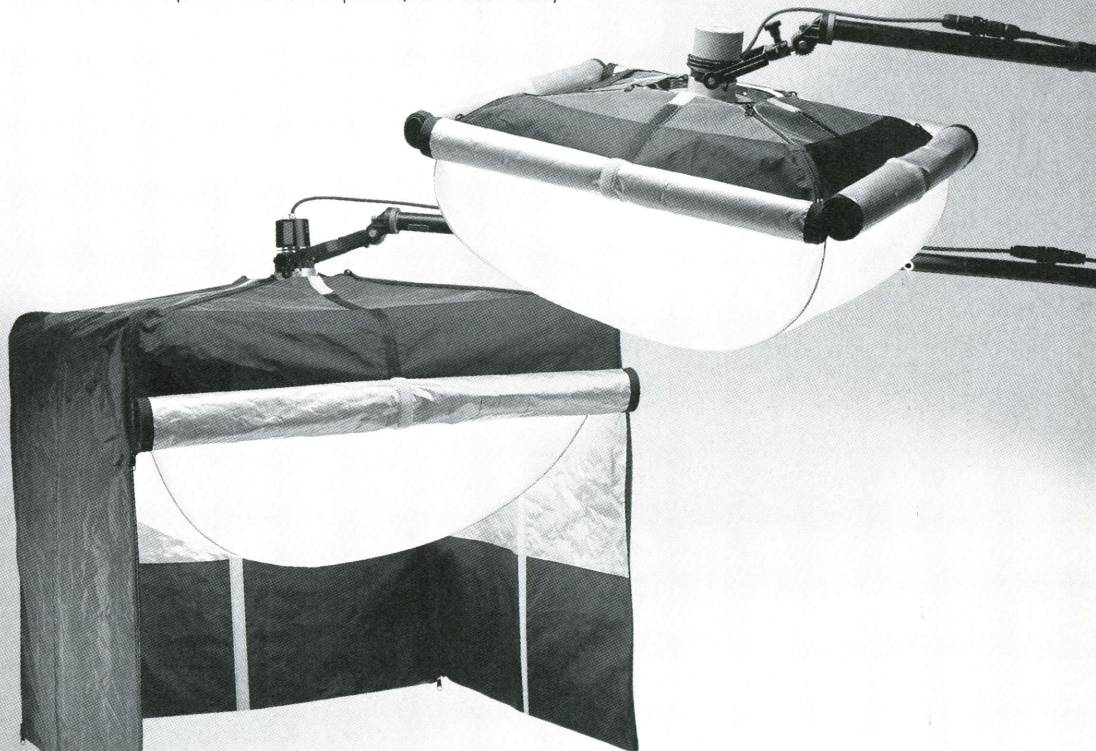
Hansard flew to Maine and spent two days shooting background plates with Calvache and Field, and the pair subsequently shot plates on their own for several more days; they used the 46 for day plates, the 79 for most night plates, and the 89 for plates lit by a full moon. Calvache says

many night plates were shot at dusk because of the increased information visible at that time, and all of the plates were shot with 18mm or 25mm lenses. Hansard's son, William Jr., flew in with his crew to shoot the rear-screen sequences, which were shot in a warehouse in a former shipyard. Calvache had to rig lights around the car and sequence them to match the variety of light sources in the background plates. "We didn't have a pre-rigging crew, so we had to make up our own rigging as we were lighting," Calvache says. (See lighting diagram on page 77.)

"The goal was to create a sense of movement, and I discovered that the best way to do that was to create variations in the light hitting the actors to suggest that movement," Calvache explains. "We basically wrapped the car with lights, and all of them were sequenced, either by means of a dimmer board or by the

*Every
so often
you'll
capture
a great
image
almost by
accident.
But
most of
the time,
those real
frames of
genius
are created
through
discipline
and your
attention to
detail.*

Pancake Lanterns (shown here with adjustable/removeable skirts)



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crew physically moving them in and out of place. We also passed objects such as branches and flags in front of the lights. No single light stayed on all the time, and we gelled them to suggest different kinds of lights to match those in the plates.”

Calvache admits that the process was nerve-wracking. “It’s almost totally intuitive,” he observes. “Because the camera’s shutter and the rear-screen projector’s shutter are synchronized, you can’t see the image projected in the rear screen while the camera is rolling. You can only see the foreground elements through the eyepiece or the videotap; the rear-screen is just black. You can’t verify the synchronization of all of the elements until you actually see the composite on film. Everything was based on careful rehearsing, and we followed Hansard’s advice on density and exposure.” He adds that the rear-screen sequences were shot on the 79

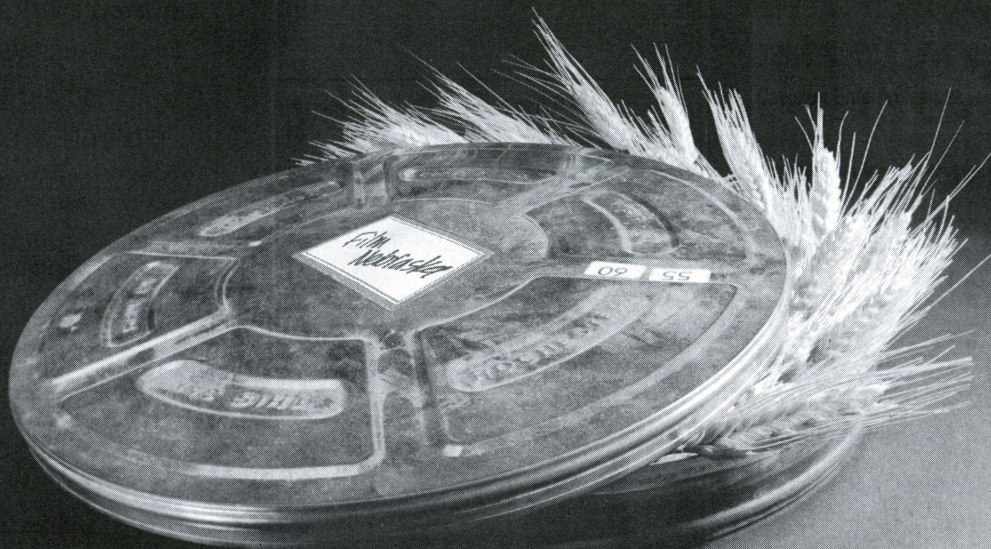
at T2.8, using 25mm and 35mm lenses (and an 85mm for one rear-view mirror shot). “We did about a week’s worth of rear-screen work in a day and a half,” Field marvels. “It could have been a disaster in so many ways. We didn’t know how those sequences turned out for more than a week because our location was so remote, and by then we’d broken down [the rear-screen setup].

“I felt like Antonio and I were two kids experimenting and enjoying it, and that was important to me,” he continues. “As an actor, I’ve seen the dynamic between directors and cinematographers be an adversarial thing, and I’ve seen it be a parent-child thing. When it’s on an even keel, it’s really nice. It was imperative that it be an intimate, trusting relationship, and that we could also get excited by each other’s ideas.”

Field, who has worked with a variety of cameramen as an actor,

producer and director, has high praise for Calvache’s approach to his craft. “He’s braver than I am, and he also trusts his work. His lighting is exquisite, but he doesn’t gild it. He’s a very thoughtful artist, and he’s very quiet about his work, almost invisible. He’s not concerned that someone might not *notice* he’s doing a good job. It’s a very rare quality.”

Of *In the Bedroom*, Calvache says with characteristic modesty that “everything in my hands was made to facilitate the actors’ work, and to capture in the least intrusive way possible their wonderful performances.” He credits Field for his determination to not let the project’s tight schedule and modest budget determine the quality of the result. “Even when we were running out of time,” he concludes, “the last thing we wanted was to compromise the piece.” ■



A Collective Effort



The Inuit feature *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* takes collaboration to a whole new level.

by Debra Kaufman

The line between drama and documentary is blurred in the film *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*. Produced by Igloolik Isuma Productions and the National Film Board of Canada, the \$1.3 (U.S.) million feature, which is set in the Canadian Arctic, earned the Camera d'Or at this year's Cannes Film Festival and is scheduled for a U.S. release in early 2002.

The tale begins when a mysterious shaman divides a small community of nomadic Inuit, upsetting its balance. Twenty years later,

brothers Amaqjuaq ("The Strong One") and Atanarjuat ("Fast Runner") challenge the evil that has crippled their community in a complex and taut narrative that includes scenes of rape, sex, murder and a naked man running for his life across the ice floes. Dressed in animal furs, with the women's faces intricately tattooed, the small groups of Inuit hunt with spears and dogsleds, hack blocks out of the ice to construct igloos, clean skins with simple knives, and warm themselves in the glow of seal oil.

Is this a drama or a documentary? If you're not sure, then director Zacharias Kunuk, cinematographer Norman Cohn, screenwriter Paul Apak Angilirq and actor Paul Qulitalik — the four founders of Igloolik Isuma Productions — will have achieved their goal. "You're looking at a kind of *cinéma vérité*, spontaneous approach to reality that's been brought into the film industry through the technical innovation of the video camera and applied to dramatic storytelling," says Cohn. "That crossover is particularly



Opposite page:
A naked
Atanarjuat
(Natar
Ungalaq) races
across the Arctic
ice floes in
*Atanarjuat: The
Fast Runner*, a
film based on
an Inuit legend
and filmed
entirely in the
Canadian Arctic.
This page: Pujaj
(Lucy, right)
tries to make up
with the other
wives (Neeve
Irhguat, left,
and Sylvia Ivalu)
after she
betrays the
family.

applicable to Inuit storytelling because it's an oral-history medium where reality and fiction are blurred."

Atanarjuat blurs fiction and nonfiction with its painstakingly faithful adherence to the traditions of the nomadic Inuit, from their clothing, tools and weapons to food, songs and housing. But the film owes its narrative style to the Inuit tradition of storytelling, as well as the history of video as a medium of community and social activism. It is the first feature-length film made by Igloolik Isuma Productions, which was founded in January 1990 as Canada's first Inuit independent production company and has since produced 20 short films.

Igloolik Isuma Productions was born out of the Canadian government's efforts in the late 1970s to extend broadcast services to all remote communities in Canada. Igloolik, a community of 1,200 located on a small island in the north Baffin region of the Canadian Arctic, had refused television not once, but twice, fearing that it would threaten their culture and language. At the same time, Canada's National Film Board was experimenting with

bringing film and video production skills to remote areas, training native people to use the tools to preserve and protect their culture and languages. The Igloolik community agreed to accept TV, but only if some of the programming was guaranteed to be in their language.

Among the initial group of Igloolik residents trained in media tools was Apak Angilirq, co-producer and co-writer of *Atanarjuat*, who died during the making of the film. Likewise, director/co-writer/co-producer/co-editor Kunuk was one of the early video pioneers in Igloolik, having brought home the Arctic's first video camera in 1981, after a trip to Montreal. Cohn is the only non-Inuit member of the Isuma collective ownership team. A widely exhibited video artist, he moved to Igloolik in 1985.

"The three of us had more than 70 years of combined experience in what is a brand-new medium," says Cohn. "After working together for so many years [as Igloolik Isuma Productions], we knew what we were doing with a video camera. If you think that just using a video camera instead of a

film camera is digital cinema, you're not going to get what you think you want."

Cohn believes that shooting video rather than film enabled the filmmakers to achieve a vérité style in *Atanarjuat*. "Because so much is invested in film, every foot of film is precious," he says. "The urgent premium of cutting things into the shortest pieces requires elaborate planning ahead of time, taking reality and breaking it up into its smallest possible units to shoot as little footage as possible.

"Video is completely the opposite of that in every sense. When I was first exposed to video, the first format was reel-to-reel tape, and 30-minute tapes cost \$11 and were infinitely reusable. So we'd let the camera run for 30 minutes, run it back right away, and if we didn't like what we saw, we'd do it over again. The whole concept of making choices ahead of time because film is so precious creates a didactic method for filmmaking. In video, you don't always try to turn it off at the earliest possible minute. Sometimes the most interesting thing happens after you think it's done — after the kiss,

A Collective Effort



Top: A close-up of Atuat (Sylvia Ivalu) reveals the tattoos that are an Inuit tradition. Bottom: Atanarjuat enjoys a light moment with his brother, Amaqjuuaa (Pakak Innukshuk).

for example, it could be the way the people look at each other before they walk down the street. Life is like that, full of visual surprises. If you cut after the kiss or after the door is slammed, you never shoot the lingering after-effects of those moments.”

In 1995, after producing a 13-episode, half-hour TV series and a number of one-hour and half-hour dramas, the members of Igloolik Isuma Productions felt that they were ready to develop a more ambitious project. Up to that point, all the work they’d done was based on improvisational skill; they’d never written a script. But they knew they’d have to write one for a \$1.3 million movie, even though Inuit culture and language is based in oral traditions.

“Writing a 115-page script in a

language that wasn’t a written language was a challenge,” admits Cohn. But the filmmakers did it the Inuit way: Apak Angilirq first recorded eight elders telling their own versions of the old legend. Then he led Isuma’s team of five writers to combine these into the first-ever Inuktituk screenplay, with an English version for outside readers. Throughout every stage of the screenwriting process, elders commented on details of cultural accuracy, changing language and explaining the subtleties of behavior and motivation that weren’t always apparent to more modernized members of the team.

That was just the beginning. In the traditional Inuit lifestyle, groups of more than 10 or 15 people

are very rarely in one place at one time. A film location that might involve up to 100 people turned out to be the largest single enterprise in which the community had engaged. Conventional filmmaking logistics, built on a hierarchy and very specific roles, also wouldn’t work with a group of people used to consensus and collaboration. “We had to get people to expand their sense of cultural values to include a large collective enterprise that required commitment over time,” says Cohn, who also functioned as production manager. “Inuit are used to participating in something as long as they’re interested, and when they’re not interested they’re gone. If one of our lead actors had decided he’d had enough and left, that would have been a very Inuit thing to do. But if we’d imported a production manager from Toronto or New York to keep people in line, we would have lost everybody.

“The Inuit process is very horizontal,” he continues. “We made our film in an Inuit way, through consensus and collaboration. It takes longer, but people felt more natural and relaxed and the result is visible on the screen. It was also exciting to see people expand their cultural values in the process of making the film.”

After writing the script and raising the funds — whose sources included the Canadian Television Fund, Channel 24 Igloolik, Vision TV and the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network — the production team was ready to shoot. They did so from April to October 1999, the warmest months in the region.

In addition to an all-Inuit cast from Igloolik, which mixed some experienced actors with mostly first-time performers, *Atanarjuat* featured a 90-percent Inuit technical crew that also included seasoned pros and novices. This mix was a deliberate choice of Igloolik Isuma Productions, which describes its



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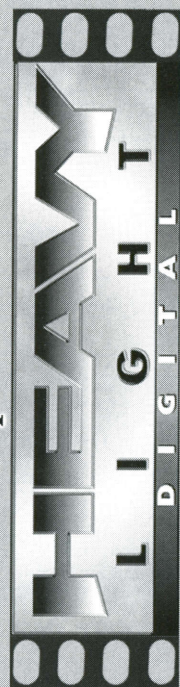
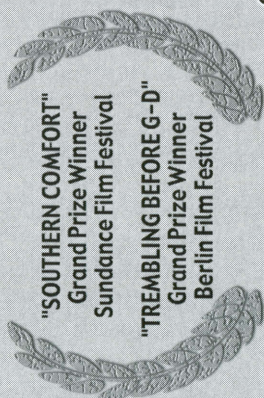
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A Collective Effort



Director Zacharias Kunuk checks a shot on a monitor. The film was made with an all-Inuit cast and a 90-percent Inuit crew.

mission as "professionalizing an Inuit style of community-based media production to preserve and enhance Inuit culture, create jobs in Igloolik and represent a distinctively Inuit point of view in the global communications marketplace."

Much of the behind-the-scenes work on *Atanarjuat* required expertise of another kind: prop makers, seamstresses and set designers either put into practice or relearned traditional skills to make hunting implements, household objects and dogsleds from bone, stone, antler and ivory and kayaks, as well as tents and costumes from animal skins. Their points of reference were elders' memories and sketches from the journals of Admiral Parry's British Naval expedition to Igloolik in 1822.

Life during the six-month shoot resembled that endured by the film's characters. On location in the Igloolik region, the cast and crew camped in primitive dwellings on the vast tundra as their ancestors had for hundreds of years — a decision that dramatically cut the expense associated with film production in the Arctic. The Inuit style of community and the humor, patience and flexibility associated with it became a "culture of production" that enabled

everyone to achieve the best level of work, says Cohn.

Atanarjuat was shot on a Sony DVW-700WS (widescreen) Digital Betacam. The Igloolik Isuma Production team had purchased the camera in 1998. "One thing you learn after 30 years of video experience is that you work with the best camera you can afford," says Cohn. "If hi-def had existed then, we would have considered it. But in 1998, the best was Sony's Digital Betacam."

After debating whether to use a PAL or NTSC model, the filmmakers decided on NTSC because they wanted to be able to rent the camera to other people, who would likely use it for the same purpose. According to Cohn, they were also aware that digital filmmakers shooting in PAL often had trouble with sync in audio post-production. "We suspected the technical differences were overstated," he adds. "The great leveler, anyway, is the quality of the camerawork."

Cohn used the Canon 5.2-48mm zoom lens, which allowed him to focus up to 6 to 9 inches. "I could get inside the action the way most conventional video lenses won't let you do and still be sharp," says Cohn. "That let me shoot a lot of scenes in which emotion is the subject. Sometimes space and light are the

Saluting a Legend

The American Society of Cinematographers (ASC) will honor the life and work of Laszlo Kovacs, ASC in the February 2002 issue of American Cinematographer.

Mr. Kovacs will be presented with the Society's Lifetime Achievement Award at the 16th Annual ASC Awards ceremony, which will be held on February 17, 2002, at the Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles.

Kovacs has compiled an extraordinary and eclectic body work, including such seminal films as "Easy Rider," "Five Easy Pieces," "Freebie and the Bean," "The King of Marvin Gardens," "Shampoo," "Slither," "Paper Moon," "New York, New York," "What's Up Doc?," "The Runner Stumbles," "Ghostbusters," "Mask" and "Legal Eagles," along with such contemporary stories as "My Best Friend's Wedding," "Return to Me" and "Miss Congeniality."



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A Collective Effort



Cinematographer Norman Cohn lines up a shot. The biggest obstacle to making the \$1.3 million feature, he says, was "convincing people that a group of Eskimos from the end of the world could be sophisticated enough to make a movie."

subject when you're looking at the big view, the traditional Arctic. But we're also playing against that expectation because much of what's happening is in spaces where people are so close together you can almost see their sweat. So I'd often be shooting 6 to 12 inches away from the actors. In face-to-face confrontations between the good guy and bad guy, the camera is literally in the middle."

Adding to the realism is the nearly total use of natural light. All of the outdoor scenes were shot with available light, the fabulous light of the world's northern reaches. Inside a stone hut or igloo, Cohn also lit with "natural" light — that is, oil lamps that would normally be the only source of light (and heat) inside. "Oil lamps give off an extremely warm temperature glow that's off the scale of what would ordinarily white-balance for film or video," he notes. "If we felt we didn't have enough light, we'd boost it with a small Pepper. By holding that light just out of frame next to one of the oil lamps, we boosted the overall light level without changing the nature of the lamps. We definitely didn't want to use fill lights or anything that would more evenly light the whole indoors; we were trying to communicate that these spaces do have dark corners.

The idea is that if you're one of the people close to the lamps, you're in the light and warmth; if you're not, you're in the dark and cold."

Nonetheless, Cohn says he did worry at times that he didn't have enough light for the indoor sequences. Working with the DigiBeta and a good lens, he says, he boosted the gain up to +3 or +6 dB and got the red-gold light he was looking for without compromising quality.

One of the most challenging sequences to shoot was one in which the naked Atanarjuat flees over the ice floes, pursued by his enemies. "Everything is moving and the light is constantly changing in that setting," says Cohn. "You have nowhere to hide. We were trying to keep the camera steady, but we weren't using a Steadicam. We used a regular sled, but instead of dogs pulling it, we had a bunch of guys pulling it along the bumpy ice. Staying synchronized and keeping the shot relatively smooth was a physical challenge."

Cohn knew that the running sequence would take an entire day, perhaps two, to shoot, thereby making continuity difficult to maintain given the constantly changing Arctic light. "You shoot a lot and

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then have a couple of continuity choices," he reports. "You pick the shots you want to work with and then match them with other shots. But what that means is that there may be great shots you can't use."

After production wrapped, the filmmakers took the NTSC DigiBeta master to Digital Film Group in Vancouver, where the standard-definition master was transferred to film. (See Post Process in AC Sept. '01 for details.)

With *Atanarjuat* now poised for a major North American release, Cohn admits that his biggest challenge was being able to approach the project using a new camera "with the sense of confidence you need as a cinematographer. If you're unsure of your tools, you can't work and you can't have enough concentration. It wasn't just a brand-new format, but the whole concept of digital video was new. So it was a tremendous gamble on the unknown qualities of our tools."

And what did he learn from the experience? "Trust Sony," he enthuses. "Sony did a good job. The camera gives you all of these memory chips to create different settings. I set it at default without changing a thing, and I was absolutely right to do that."

The biggest hurdle the filmmakers had to overcome in making *Atanarjuat* wasn't the cold, the light or even the technology. It was, Cohn says, "convincing people that a group of Eskimos from the end of the world could be sophisticated enough to make a movie."

"Some stereotypes are hard to crack, but the Inuit are extremely intelligent, resourceful and capable people. We knew that the more we did things our way, the better our film would be." ■

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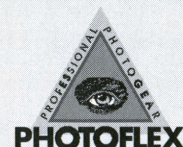
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Dangerous Crossings



Cinematographer Lisa Wiegand and director Lorena David bring an indie ethic to the action genre in *The Courier*.

by Stephanie Argy

The *Courier*, a low-budget action movie, is the second collaboration between director Lorena David and cinematographer Lisa Wiegand. Wiegand says that one of the pleasures of working with David is how much the director pushes her and allows her to experi-

ment. "She inspires me to do new things," the cinematographer says.

The duo's latest project, which had a budget of just over \$1 million, stars Mario Lopez as David Morales, a student attending college in San Diego on a soccer scholarship. After he injures his knee, Morales loses the scholarship. Unable to tell his mother back in Tijuana what has happened, he looks for work so that he can finance his education and stay in school. He finds a job with a doctor who claims that he's doing animal research forbidden in the U.S.; the doctor hires Morales to transport serum into Mexico so that he can continue his work.

In reality, the serum is destined for a gravely ill drug dealer in Mexico, who is being kept alive by the medicine. Morales finds himself increasingly entrapped by the job, and when he tries to free himself from the situation, the villains kidnap his mother to force him to make one last delivery.

Working with three Kodak Vision stocks — 250D 5246, 500T 5279 and 800T 5289 — Wiegand devised three different looks for *The Courier*. For the San Diego scenes, which represent the normal life Morales has before his troubles begin, Wiegand designed an appropriately "normal" look, one that contrasted significantly with later, more extreme sequences.

For scenes set in Tijuana, Wiegand pull-processed the 46 two stops to desaturate the colors and decrease contrast. She also used Tiffen Warm Pro-Mist filters on the lens — as high as Pro-Mist 1 for exteriors, and between ¼ and ½ for interiors. For a single scene shot in a very dark tequila bar, which she spotted three days before shooting there, Wiegand used the 89 and pulled it only one stop. Even though she pulled the 89 less than the 46, she found it much harder to match than the others. She speculates that might be because the 89 was processed in



two separate batches.

Wiegand's most extreme experiment was conducted for a series of surreal sequences that appear periodically throughout the movie but are not fully explained until the end. The cinematographer shot through a dense green filter normally used for black-and-white work, and during timing, she color-corrected the image to be as close to normal as she could get. The effect is that every color except green is desaturated, while green appears in the highlights and the blacks. Wiegand says that although the effect isn't consistent from shot to shot, both she and David felt the strategy was very effective for their purpose, which entailed simply

dropping the individual sequences into other scenes.

To achieve these extremes, Wiegand collaborated closely with FotoKem timer Bob Fredrickson. She says Fredrickson was not thrown by any of her requests, and he offered ideas on how to smooth differences by cooling down or warming up entire sequences. He also helped her through the difficult process of timing the movie's numerous split-screen sequences, which required that the look for individual scenes be set well before the look of the movie as a whole.

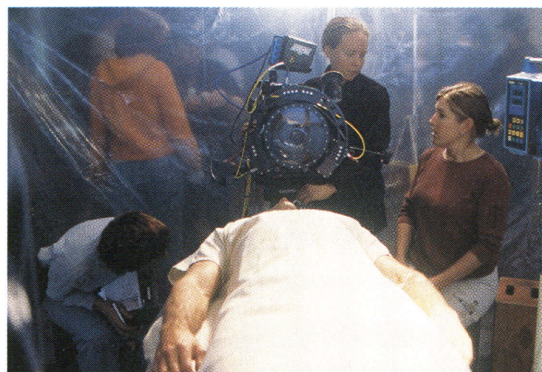
In the surreal green-filter sequence, Wiegand and David used the Clairmont Squishy Lens for shots from a character's point of

Opposite page: Cinematographer Lisa Wiegand used Clairmont Camera's Squishy Lens to capture a drugged-out person's POV of the evil Dr. Drake (Nancy O'Dell) in this shot from *The Courier*. This page, top: For this shot of a businessman (Fritz Greve), Wiegand used Kodak Vision 250D 5246 with a green filter made for black-and-white photography, and then timed the image back as close to normal as possible. Left: Wiegand behind the camera.



Dangerous Crossings

Right: For the Tijuana section of the film, Wiegand shot on 5246 and pull-processed it by two stops; she also used a Tiffen Warm Pro-Mist 1 on the lens. Below (top): Wiegand (center) prepares for an upcoming shot. Bottom: Wiegand advises actress Nancy O'Dell.



view. They had tested the effect of using Vaseline on the lens, but when they saw the Squishy Lens demo, they both thought it looked much more organic. David felt so strongly about the lens that when the producers said they didn't have the money to rent it, she paid for it out of her own pocket. (Wiegand wryly notes that she and

David were both amused by the irony of the Squishy Lens being used on a film directed and shot by women, because the pliable element in the center of the lens that gives it its "squish" is the same kind of material used in breast implants.)

Wiegand says that manipulating colors has always been an interest of hers, and *The Courier* allowed her to try some non-digital techniques that she had wanted to attempt for years. "Because it was a low-budget film, we had to brainstorm about things we could do on-set instead of in post." Fortunately, she was able to do some tests before production began, which is unusual on such a modestly budgeted project. "On low-budget movies, the shoot is often the test," she notes.

The cinematographer says that her lighting package usually includes a lot of Kino Flos and HMIs. "Kinos work really well on low-budget movies. They give you a really nice light without taking up a lot of space, and they don't draw a lot of power. Also, they don't heat up as much as traditional lights, which is important if you're working on small sets."

The Courier had numerous night exterior scenes, so she also utilized two Condors, on which she

placed a 5K, a 12K, and a Maxi-Brute aimed at different areas. For night interiors, she used several small tungsten lights.

The production was shot in the standard 1.85:1 format, and the camera was an Arriflex 535B equipped with Zeiss Superspeeds and an Angenieux zoom, all of which were rented from Birns & Sawyer in Hollywood. Wiegand says she enjoyed using the zoom lens when she had enough stop; she even zoomed in and out mid-shot, a technique frequently employed in Hong Kong action movies. "A lot of times, I'd be going with the flow," she says. "You can do some crazy, creative stuff."

However, she admits that the technique was hard on her first assistant, Julie Donovan, who often had to pull focus on some wild shots without any rehearsal. "I'm surprised she didn't smack me," says Wiegand. The cinematographer was initially told she wouldn't be able to take Donovan along on the shoot for budgetary reasons, but she successfully argued that on a job as complex as *The Courier*, which required many scenes to be shot wide open, she needed a first AC she could trust.

Wiegand notes that she is

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Dangerous Crossings

The film's finale boasts an intricate action sequence in which a character falls from a helicopter into a lake. "We had all kinds of crazy stunts," Wiegand remarks.



especially reliant on Donovan because she herself didn't come up through the assistant ranks. Instead, she studied in the graduate division of the UCLA Film School. She says she wanted to be a cinematographer from the age of 15, when she read an interview with Frederick Elmes, ASC. This ambition worked out very well

for her at school, because everyone else in the program wanted to direct, so there were plenty of projects for her to shoot.

One student for whom she shot a film recommended her to David, who was at that time prepping the feature *Eastside*. David says there were two things that piqued

her interest in Wiegand: one was a photograph on her wall that showed her father, a photographer, taking an 8"x10" picture of Wiegand as a little girl. David says that made her confident that Wiegand had been steeped in photography since childhood. The second factor was that Wiegand asked to see David's own reel, a request that hadn't been voiced by any of the other cinematographers with whom David had met.

Although David didn't do storyboards for *The Courier*, she and Wiegand and editor Allan Spencer Wall spent about 30 hours devising shot lists. The trio also discussed how to best use the camera to show what was really going on. "She does a huge amount of homework," Wiegand says of David.

To plan action sequences, the filmmakers went to the home of stunt coordinator Spiro Razatos and watched dailies from his other projects, using them as a way to narrow down precisely what they wanted in their own film.

Although Wiegand had previously shot projects that involved hand-to-hand combat and gunplay, *The Courier* was her first experience with large-scale action sequences that included explosions, helicopters and heavy-duty stunts. "We had all kinds of crazy stunts," she remarks. Fortunately, the B-camera operator for the stunt sequences, Igor Meglic, had a lot of experience shooting such scenes. "He was really helpful when I had to do process pickups," says Wiegand. "He had tips about putting in more action."

Wiegand says that the production wisely concentrated much of the budget on stunts, which enabled the stunt team to ensure that the action would be safe. She says she felt very confident in the precautions that were taken — not so much for herself, but for her crew. "When I'm shooting, I think about other people."

To heighten the intensity of action sequences, Wiegand manipulated the camera's shutter angle, reducing it to 90 degrees and sometimes 45 degrees to give the footage a strobing effect. She used this effect particularly for moments when the main character, who has been afraid of reinjuring his knee, decides to become very physical. In one such scene, set at a highway rest area, Morales makes a phone call and momentarily puts down the red-and-white ice chest that contains the last delivery he is transporting to Mexico. When he turns around, he finds that picnickers with identical red-and-white coolers have filled the rest area, and he has to run among them in order to relocate his.

One of the biggest stunts is set in the desert, where Morales' girlfriend shoots the gas tank of an FBI truck that is pursuing him as he rides away on a motorcycle. For this sequence, the crew used four cameras, including two Eyemos in crash housings. The stunt was shot

in two parts: first, the explosion of the truck, and then a "rollover" as the truck hits a small hill and flips. In both cases, the crew had to get the shot in one take because they knew the truck would be too damaged afterwards.

Razatos helped Wiegand select camera positions for the shots. For the fireball stunt, the A-camera was positioned behind Ali Landry,

who plays the girlfriend. The stunt actually takes place with her in the foreground; then, after the explosion, she turns to the camera to deliver a line. The other cameras were down closer to the truck, with the vehicle coming toward them.

It's hard to predict what's going to happen with crash cameras, and because they are unmanned it's impossible to control them during a

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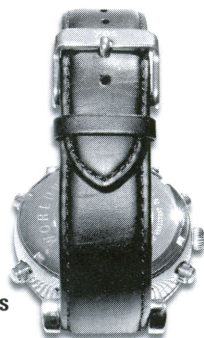
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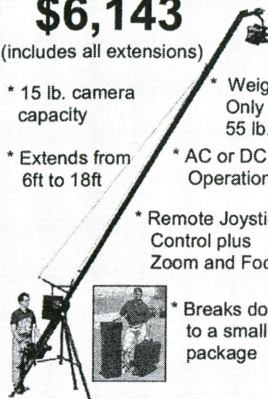
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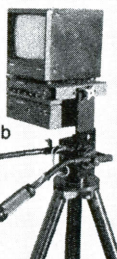


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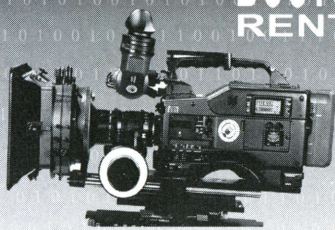
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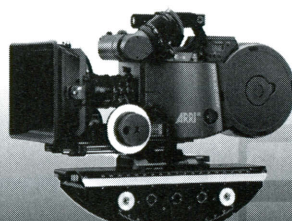
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Dangerous Crossings

shot. Wiegand notes that this is one of the reasons why so many cameras are traditionally used during heavy action sequences. Also, because crash cameras tend to be older, they malfunction more often; in this case, there were some problems with scratching on the film, and at least one camera didn't roll. Nevertheless, Wiegand says some of the best footage came from the crash cameras, because the shots were so intense.

In another sequence, shot at night, Morales escapes from a police station by hooking his handcuffs over a wire and sliding from the roof of the station to the top of a moving semi trailer in the street. This scene was filmed in three or four takes, with the two cameras covering the scene positioned in various locations that changed from take to take — on the roof, on a lower-level balcony and on the ground.

The two cameras shared the same lens packages. Because Meglic was usually handholding his camera, Wiegand gave him her widest lens, an 18mm. Wiegand was on a tripod, so she felt that it was better for her to use the 25mm. In both cases, though, she stayed relatively wide because she felt the wider lenses expanded the space and made the action more dynamic. Also, wide lenses hid the fact that the action was being performed by a stuntman. Later, the crew set up a horizontal dolly wire, slid Lopez along on a dolly and shot with a camera on a dutch angle in order to create a cheated close-up of his downward slide.

At the end of the movie, the villains try to escape in a helicopter, but Morales grabs one of its skids and is dragged up into the air. He soon falls from the helicopter, plummeting into a lake. Before *The Courier*, Wiegand had never even been in a helicopter, so shooting the scene was particularly

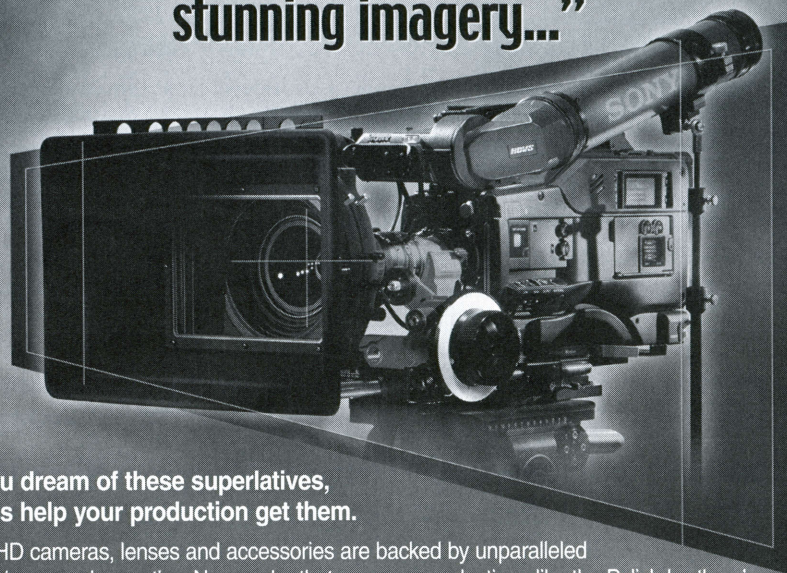
exciting for her.

The stunt was divided into three sections: a jump onto the helicopter and the helicopter taking off, the fight on the helicopter, and the fall into the lake. The take-off and fall were shot during the same day on location. Later, on a pickup day, the fight scenes were shot with the actors at an airport, with the helicopter either on the ground or hovering a few feet above. At Meglic's suggestion, Wiegand shot many of the pickup shots with the camera whip-panning to and from the action, so that the editor would have many cut points and chances to enhance the excitement.

Wiegand says that while she was shooting *The Courier*, a cinematographer friend of hers, Scott Kevan, was shooting the movie *Bug*. The two of them would call each other up to compare notes. Wiegand remembers Kevan telling her, "I thought my shoot was insane until I heard about yours."

For Wiegand, *The Courier* offered a chance to experiment and to try new things — night scenes, action sequences, chases. "It wasn't that I felt I couldn't do those things, but I *hadn't* done them," she says. She adds that although each film she does seems bigger and more complicated than the last, she's still happy to work on very low-budget projects if they seem intriguing. Her next film is a 35mm sci-fi short called *The New, New World*, and she is also working on a low-budget digital-video feature, *Cherry Bomb*. "I just want to shoot and work with interesting directors, even if the project doesn't involve a lot of money." ■

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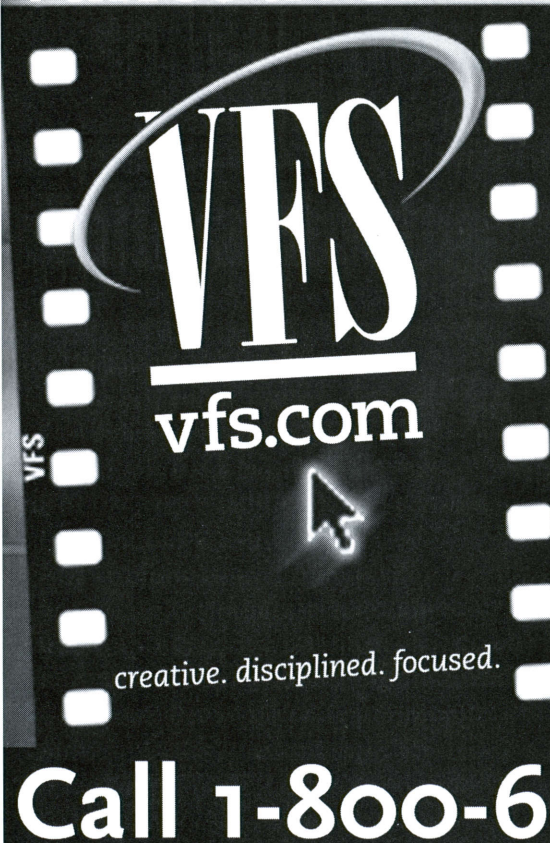
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Through the Looking Glass



Renowned artist David Hockney theorizes that classical painters may have used early optical devices, such as mirrors and lenses, to help create the paintings that continue to inspire cinematographers.

by Ray Zone

“Photography has been studied as an isolated phenomenon of the 19th and 20th century, but the spirit of photography is much older than its history.”

—Heinrich Schwartz

The Mirror of the Artist and the Mirror of the Devout

David Hockney is onto something. For the past two years he has haunted art galleries around the world, accumulating strong evidence for ideas that challenge conventional art history. He has summarized his findings in a new book published by Viking Studio called *Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters*.

Last summer, while being interviewed about his discoveries for a BBC documentary, Hockney conducted some demonstrations on a Panavision soundstage in Woodland Hills. AC executive editor Stephen Pizzello, cinematographer John Bailey, ASC and I were invited to observe and to hear Hockney explain his findings.

"The thesis I am putting forward here," Hockney says, "is that from the early 15th century, many Western artists used optics — by which I mean mirrors and lenses [or a combination of the two] — to create living projections." Surveying hundreds of paintings created over a 600-year period, Hockney has demonstrated how these artists could have used projected images to directly create drawings and paintings. He further theorizes that this new way of optically seeing and depicting the world became widespread. We watched as he built a camera obscura on the Panavision soundstage and replicated the mirror-lens projection techniques that he believes the old masters used to make their paintings.

"What Hockney has done," says Bailey, "is to bring his eye as a painter to the true origins of photography and cinematography as a lens-based form of image capture."

The invention of photography is generally dated at 1839, when William Henry Fox Talbot, after experimenting with paper soaked in silver chloride, first affixed an optical image on paper. Talbot had been attempting to sketch with a camera



Opposite page: Artist David Hockney poses by a window on a Panavision soundstage to suggest the camera obscura effect he believes the old masters used to create their paintings. This page, top: A convex mirror adorns the front of a full-size camera obscura that the artist built at Panavision to demonstrate his theory. Below: A watercolor sketch by Hockney shows how the old masters might have made paintings using a mirror-lens with a window in a dark room.



lucida in 1833 by the shores of Lake Como, with little success. Suddenly, he wrote, "the idea occurred to me how charming it would be if it were possible to cause these natural images to imprint themselves durably, and remain fixed upon the paper!"

"I am contradicting a lot of the history of photography and art," Hockney concedes. "It was not the camera that was developed in the 1830s in England and France. It was merely the chemistry to fix an image. I begin much further back."

"In the 19th century," says Bailey, "the use of lenses to capture images and put them on a two-dimensional plane meant images were no longer fugitive — they could be fixed. But the capturing of images with lens devices had been going on well before that."

"Photography is the daughter of painting," declares Hockney. "The year 1420 is where naturalism seems to begin. I'm saying it happened because a certain tool arrived and artists figured out how to use it."

Hockney's inquiry into optical

Through the Looking Glass



Producer John Hooper checks the camera as Hockney waits to be interviewed for a BBC documentary about his findings.

techniques began early in 1999 when he made a drawing using a camera lucida, a device invented in 1807 that he characterizes as “a prism on a stick that creates the illusion of an image of whatever is in front of it on a piece of paper below.” After visiting an exhibit of portrait drawings by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres at the National Gallery in London in January 1999, Hockney began to think that Ingres had used some mechanical device to achieve the extraordinary likenesses in the portraits. The authority and assurance of Ingres’ lines in the drawings seemed to Hockney to be traced rather than “eyeballed” and “groped for,” as with freehand drawing. He was reminded of drawings with very assured lines by Andy Warhol that had been deftly traced from projected slide images.

As Hockney is quick to note, however, “Optics don’t make marks [on a canvas]. I’m not saying that these techniques make [painting] easy.” He emphasizes that the artist is still responsible for the conception and rendering of the image. But Hockney began to wonder whether Ingres had used a camera obscura to achieve the extraordinary realism in some of his paintings. He noticed that the light and shadow in the

artist’s paintings were very photographic, and felt that the highly natural folds of fabric on display, in clothing falling to the floor or wrapping around bodies, seemed to indicate the use of optics.

“The term ‘camera obscura’ just means ‘dark room’ in Italian,” notes Hockney. Indeed, if Ingres used optics, he was probably not the first artist to do so. Art historians have long thought that by 1658, Vermeer, a neighbor of the lensmaker Van Leeuwenhoek, may have used a camera obscura to produce his paintings. As early as 1413, Filippo Brunelleschi, the discoverer of vanishing-point perspective, created an experiment for tracing lines of sight on a flat surface. It was an extremely clever use of optics in which the doorway of the middle portal of the Santa Maria del Fiore was used as a camera obscura, along with a mirror, to capture the image of the Baptistry of San Giovanni 115 feet away across the square.

In his 1558 book *Magiae Naturalis*, Giambattista Della Porta wrote of the camera obscura, “You must shut all the chamber windows, and it will do well to shut up all holes besides, lest any light breaking in should spoil all. Onely [sic] make one hole, that shall be a hands breadth and length ... over against this, let there be white walls of paper, or white clothes, so shall you see all that is without in the sun, and those that walk in the streets”

In March 2000, Hockney built a camera obscura in his studio at the suggestion of Charles Falco, a professor of optical sciences at the University of Arizona. Using a simple, concave shaving mirror as a lens, he projected an image of a friend outside in bright sunlight onto a piece of paper. The image was upside-down. “When we made the first image with a mirror,” says Hockney, “I knew we had discovered something rather big. I realized that no art historian knew this. It was a

pivotal moment.”

Eventually, Hockney journeyed to Italy and stood on the very spot where Brunelleschi created his experiment in the Santa Maria del Fiore in 1413. Guided by a historical document that described Brunelleschi’s experiment, Hockney used a concave-mirror lens to project an image of the Baptistry onto canvas just as Brunelleschi had done. Hockney also began to closely examine the works of the Dutch painters Robert Campin and Jan van Eyck, who depicted mirrors and lenses in several of their paintings of the 1430s. At that time, painters and mirror-makers were both members of the same guild. “I don’t think the first lenses were in telescopes,” says Hockney. “I think they were used by artists. Artists would have lenses, not scientists. In the 15th century, images were far more important than science.”

Hockney has paid particular attention to Van Eyck’s 1434 painting *Arnolfini Wedding*, in which a convex mirror depicted in the background reflects the entire scene, in detail, from the back. Hockney notes that the painting’s highly intricate chandelier, done without any detailed underdrawing or corrections, is seen head on and not from below, as one might expect, and also uses very complicated foreshortening. “I’ve worked out how these portraits could have been made using optical techniques,” says Hockney. “They are living projections made from a mirror. They are made in the same size as a great many portraits made in the Netherlands from about 1430 on.”

“At that time,” says Bailey, “painting became a sort of proto-photography. Instead of emulsion, artists used pigment or pen and ink. Even though painters continued to render and finish their paintings in freehand, the actual capture of those images was done with an optical lens or mirror that reflected the perspec-

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Through the Looking Glass

For *Pearlblossom Highway*, Hockney shot hundreds of close-up photos from different perspectives and created a collage to fashion a single, panoramic view.



tive and relationship of objects as seen in the real world. That was a fundamental, conceptual difference that changed the nature of painting. Painting was no longer a magical process where a person had a message sent through the ether to him, but was simply reduced to using a physical object, a scientific tool to assist. The whole concept changed.”

In disputing Hockney’s theory, art historians have generally pointed out the lack of written documents or artifacts that would prove the use of optics in classic painting. But Hockney has a ready rebuttal to that argument. “All artists are very secretive,” he says. “They were in business. The artist is not going to tell people how he does things. They found a very useful tool that they kept to themselves. There were all kinds of reasons for not writing down the techniques. Try and imagine what people would have thought of these tools in 1430 — magic and sorcery were punishable by burning.

“Historians have always said that the use of lenses didn’t begin until the 16th or 17th century. But if you want to look for the use of mirrors and lenses, you should look at the pictures themselves where we might find evidence of their use. Optical equipment is nothing really but a piece of glass — or, it turns out, a concave mirror.”

Sometime in the 16th century, conventional lenses became large enough and of good enough quality that artists already familiar with the use of projection would use them for the wider field of view they made possible. Caravaggio may have used the improved lenses to great advantage at the end of the 16th century. In addition to achieving greater realism, the artist might have been able to render a single subject multiple times on the same canvas. “When we see artists like Caravaggio move from a mirror to a lens,” Hockney contends, “we begin to detect a few odd things. Optical effects become noticeable.

It’s the kind of distortion that comes from a lens.”

Hockney also began to notice photo-optical aberrations in 16th-century paintings by Hans Holbein and Lorenzo Lotto, in which change of focus was present. As Bailey points out, “If you are trying to capture figures in the real world in three dimensions that are projected on a two-dimensional surface like a canvas, there are going to be depth-of-field or focus issues.”

Multiple perspectives with different vanishing points are also evident in the works of Caravaggio and Van Eyck. In his own photographic works of recent years, such as *Pearlblossom Highway* (1986), Hockney has used multiple perspectives in the creation of photographic montages comprising many close-up images captured from different points of view and collaged together. “I discovered things because of what I’d done with cameras myself,” he says. “The attraction of the collaged

picture, in a way, is that you are pulled into it. You are actually inside it, moving around."

"Hockney took the idea of a single-element lens used as a capture device," says Bailey, "and introduced the element of montage or non-immediate time. He's shown how he feels that Caravaggio, Van Eyck and others constructed their canvases with multiple figures — not as an arranged tableau with a bunch of models, but one at a time and rendering one at a time. The reason for this is that the lens used could not be focused. In order to render in focus the figures on another plane, the capture medium itself had to be moved in and out, nearer or farther from the lens to bring it into focus. That, essentially, created a montage or collage."

This technique also may have optical anomalies of scale and foreshortening that Hockney has discovered in many paintings by Van Eyck, Caravaggio and Velazquez. Another surprising discovery was the fact that so many of the subjects in the paintings were left-handed. "A mirror projection is upside-down," says Hockney, "but a lens will project upside-down and reversed from right to left. In 1300, in the works of Giotto, there were no left-handed drinkers. Suddenly, around 1600, when lenses were first used by painters, we begin to see many left-handed drinkers. This lasted for about 40 years, when good-quality flat mirrors reversed the image back."

To create an overview of art history in his studio, Hockney constructed "The Great Wall," a timeline depicting hundreds of major paintings from about 1150 to 1889, when he says the "post-optic" period in painting began. Hockney's Great Wall, reproduced in his book, contrasts two visual traditions. The older freehand mode of "eyeballing" distinctly declined when the lens-based tradition may have begun in about 1430. Optical painting

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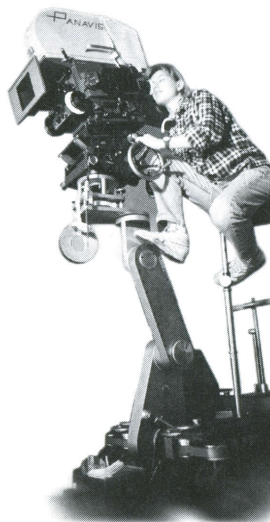
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Through the Looking Glass

prevailed until 1889, when the advent of chemical photography sparked a revolution against realism in painting and freehand returned. This was first noticeable with the paintings of Cézanne and such movements as Impressionism. Cubism extended the nature of that revolt into a rearrangement of pictorial space.

A few months prior to his demonstration at Panavision, Hockney had projected a still life onto a piece of paper in a darkened room using a concave mirror, and it prompted a surprising revelation. "We put a cabbage on a string, and it started spinning," says the artist. "I realized instantly that it was a movie, a color movie that they must have seen 600 years ago. But there was no way to capture the images; they were ephemeral. There's a straight line from that to TV and movies today."

"What is exciting for cinematographers," says Bailey, "is to see that our art may have had its origins, both in terms of the idea of capture and the idea of staging actors or tableaux dramatically, in the 15th century and not in the middle of the 19th century or later, when film began. Now we have a history of cinema that goes back 600 years."

"The handmade image is a human vision," says Hockney. "The power of images will endure." ■

David Hockney's Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters is now available in a 296-page hardbound edition that features 460 illustrations (402 in color). Published by Viking Studio, the book (ISBN 0-670-03026-0) retails for \$60. Another relevant volume on the subject of optics and art is Brunelleschi's Dome: How a Renaissance Genius Reinvented Architecture by Ross King (Walker & Company: New York, ISBN 0-8027-1366-1, 194 pp., \$24).

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Six Recent Encounters With Art

by John Bailey, ASC

Gustave Caillebotte's 1875 canvas *Les Raboteurs de Parquets* is notable for its forced perspective, luminous raking backlight and celebration of hard manual labor.



First Encounter

Last summer I led a tour of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art exhibition "Winslow Homer and His Critics" for a group of students from the American Film Institute. Homer's oils and watercolors depict a very American ethos. Early in his career, as a magazine illustrator, he documented the ever-turning tides of the Civil War. Under different conditions he might have become a photographer for the Mathew Brady studio. Considering how this would have altered the history of American art sparked in me thoughts about the 150-year dialogue between painting and photography. Later that evening, the students and I explored the cross-fertilization of these two arts during a free-wheeling discussion at the Kodak offices

in Hollywood.

In previous pieces for this magazine, I've written of Nestor Almendros' abiding love for the paintings of French Mannerist Georges de La Tour and of Vittorio Storaro's reverence for the golden palette of Venetian Vittore Carpaccio. In a direct homage, Gordon Willis' recreation of Edward Hopper's alienating compositions and light permeates the film *Pennies From Heaven* down to its celluloid base. I have spoken as well of the schematic fracturing of the human face in the watercolors of Egon Schiele, which was a motivating force for my lighting in *The Accidental Tourist*.

It is, however, the recent Museum of Contemporary Art retrospective of the photography of David Hockney and the publication of his certain-to-be contro-

versial book *Secret Knowledge* that is the more immediate impetus for these musings. (See separate article on page 96.) Hockney's research over the past several years has led him to conclude that optical viewing devices were used to project the three-dimensional world onto two-dimensional surfaces such as canvas or paper, pushing back the "idea" of photography as far as the early 15th century. He posits that Old Master painters such as Van Eyck, Durer, Caravaggio and Ingres used mirrors and single-element lenses to quickly "capture," through tracing, the essence of sitters. The method could be called proto-photographic. The "invention" of photography in the mid-19th century is merely the technical endpoint of a process that artists have been using for

centuries. The implications of this thesis are formidable. It subverts the hoary dichotomy of painting as art and photography as craft.

Second Encounter

A ride up the exterior escalators of the Pompidou Centre has long afforded one of the great views of Paris. As the city streets drop away, you are slowly transported into an empyrean of high modern art. So it was with some surprise that I discovered on a recent visit that the blockbuster spring show, "Hitchcock and Art," was not sited on the ground floor adjacent to the movie theater, but rather in the lofty, bright galleries of the sixth floor. A foyer wall leading to the exhibition was stenciled with a quote from Jean-Luc Godard; it said that while we may not remember the intricate plot details of a Hitchcock film, certain "props" used in his films, such as a cigarette lighter, a scarf, a watch, a camera, imprint themselves indelibly onto our minds. These objects become emblematic, even signifiers, of the film's drama.

Passing through the quiet whoosh of the gallery's pneumatic doors, I am sucked into a near Stygian darkness, the only point of reference being the insistent strains of Bernard Herrmann's music. Slowly, the spectral shapes of glass vitrines float out of the ambient blackness — three to a row, seven rows, a total of 21 cases (spiritual numerologists take note). Each vitrine contains a single relic from a Hitchcock film, nestled on a satin, cardinal-red cushion and lit from above by a blazing spotlight. These are the very "props" of which Godard spoke. Hitchcock, the tormented Catholic filmmaker, is exposed on an altar of reliquaries. All that is missing is incense. Somehow, the rest of the exhibit (storyboards, sketches, film clips) becomes anti-climactic. I can't help thinking Hitchcock would never have blown his best shot in the credit sequence.

Many filmmakers would photograph these objects as mere "inserts," necessary to advance a plot point or jumpstart a scene transition. But for

Hitchcock, objects in the physical world often have a talismanic presence. His intense framing of them creates a parallel reality, one filled with premonitions and warnings.

My brain leapfrogs to the video world of *Digital Babylon*. This is the title of a new book by author Shari Roman that closely examines the work of the Danish and American Dogme filmmakers. I recently shared an event with her at Skylight Books in Los Feliz, California. There it became clear in conversation with local and emerging filmmakers just how times have changed. The highly charged, fleeting images of many current mainstream films have totally absorbed the stylistic tics and conceits of commer-

Why has it become so difficult or so unimportant for most of us to encounter art in a slow, thoughtful manner?

cials and music videos. It is no longer a matter of style, but a sensibility so pervasive as to become a new grammar. To this generation, the obsessions of Hitchcock's images must seem the incunabula of cinema.

Third Encounter

Several days after viewing "Hitchcock and Art," I go to the Louvre. I have not been there since the massive renovation and building of I.M. Pei's pyramid entry. Everything looks brand new until I begin a pilgrimage through the vaulted and magnificent Grand Gallery, a treasure house of signature oil paintings. Hordes of summer tourists roam about, video cameras constantly rolling as they walk, creating an endless

tracking shot interrupted only by the occasional zoom in and out of some beleaguered Italian School masterpiece. This procession snakes to the end of the hall and around a corner. There, after repeated signs warning of its increasing proximity, is Da Vinci's *La Gioconda* (the Mona Lisa), waiting in solemn, enigmatic repose. When I finally get down front, I am overwhelmed by the size of the crowd. I step aside to watch a flurry of flashbulbs and flip-screen camcorders assault the smallish painting, which remains secure, like a world political leader, behind bulletproof glass. What becomes apparent is how few people actually look at the painting beyond what they see through the camera eyepiece. Their encounter with this icon of Western art will be realized only later, when they watch the playback on their TVs.

The point of this anecdote is not to berate the hapless tourist but to consider a simple question. When we confront a new visual experience, how do we interpret it? How much of our life do we see mediated, even distorted, through the prism of cinema and television? Plenty of psychologists and cultural anthropologists have considered this issue from the perspective of ethics and behaviorism. But what strikes me suddenly is more elemental. In what way does the current grammar of quick, disruptive edits and dynamic camera-work influence the way we look at the real world? I'd like to freeze-frame that question for a moment while I tell you what I encountered the next day.

Fourth Encounter

When you step into the Musée d'Orsay, a stone's throw from the Louvre, you confront one of the more perverse ironies of art history. The spaciouly open ground-floor galleries house the largely discredited academic and Salon art of the 19th century. The work of the great movement that displaced it in the public favor, Impressionism and post-Impressionism, is stuffed into cramped and claustrophobic rooms at the very top of the renovated railway station, accessible by a confusing maze of escalators.

It is through this warren that an

endless procession of tour guides, marking flags held aloft, herd their charges. A babble of languages drifts past as the Monets and Renoirs inspire paparazzi-like explosions of flashes and camcorders all too reminiscent of the star-frenzy of the Mona Lisa.

I move to the quieter space of Gallery 30. Its freestanding wall holds one of the less noted treasures of the movement — a painting that has informed my own aesthetic in the same way that de La Tour and Carpaccio influenced the sensibilities of my two great mentors. It is *Les raboteurs de parquet*, the most well known and notorious painting by Gustave Caillebotte. Its elongated forced perspective, luminously raking backlight, and celebration of hard manual labor cuts against the grain of the many diaphanous leises depicted by most of Impressionism's seminal figures. Caillebotte's three hunched-over, barebacked men scraping a hardwood floor with heavy two-handled planes have, if isolated as single figures, a proto-cinematic presence, akin to the sequential time photos of Muybridge. I first stood transfixed by this work's Cartier-Bressonian immediacy when I saw it more than 30 years ago in the Jeu du Paume.

I become lost again in the myriad details of this inviting painting: a pile of shavings separating the newly scraped wood from the bright reflection of the wet floor, the eye led upwards toward the luminous grilled window jutting out the top of the frame. There is much to discern from this painting, but it takes time — and time is what few visitors seem to have. The rush to move on to the next iconic painting seems to create an environment where it is hard to study any single work. Later, as I have coffee near the legendary Shakespeare and Co. bookstore (publisher of Joyce's *Ulysses*), I look at a souvenir postcard of Caillebotte's painting and reflect on my hectic museum movements of the past several days.

Why has it become so difficult or so unimportant for most of us to encounter art in a slow, thoughtful manner? Are these static, frozen images

too simple for us to linger over? Do we flatter ourselves that we can now process images with the speed of a computer? Perhaps. But, strange as it may seem, I think part of the explanation lies buried somewhere in our contemporary movie-going experience. For some years (certainly since the advent of the era of Avid editing), one has been able to argue that movie images are perceived more as data than as art.

I discussed this issue several years ago in a piece for this magazine. My focus then was on the effortless way that emerging non-linear systems such as the Avid were enabling editors and directors to manipulate "shots." I worried that the cinematographer's carefully created compositions and

There is a crucial need for cinematographers to reassert the primacy of the carefully crafted image as the essential dramatic device of movies.

lighting, the analog process of a disappearing photochemical era, were being siphoned off into a gushing digital stream. Further, the critical viewing of these images was seldom being done in a darkened projection room. Conforming the digitized "cut" to a celluloid workprint was time-intensive, and such close scrutiny of the photography was deemed not urgent. I suggested then that the cinematographer's most subtle work was under siege. A lot has happened since then.

Fifth Encounter

I'd like to unfreeze the question I posed earlier. Is this new grammar of

editing movies, itself a development from the insistent non-narrative aesthetic of commercials and music videos, influencing the way a post-literate generation processes all imagery, including what we call "art"? Does it have deeper connections to the way we live in the physical world? If so, then movie editing is merely the tip of the iceberg.

Earlier I spoke of the Dogme movement. I have followed the growing fortunes of these movies with keen interest and adopted some of its tenets in the first digital-video feature I photographed, *The Anniversary Party* (see *AC* July '01). Though some of the movies made under Dogme guidelines have been "filmed" on celluloid, DV seems tailor-made to Dogme's reductionist approach. Its 10 commandments frame an aesthetic that dictates a simplified style and technique. The buzzword of choice for many videographers and Dogme advocates is "capture." This term describes to me the antics of a Nabokovian lepidopterist (the cinematographer) snaring loose shots out of the sky and the collector (the editor) pinning them to the Avid for cataloging and classification, a purely opportunistic rather than artistic technique.

On the other hand, this "democratization" (another favorite buzzword) of filmmaking has been developing for decades, at least since the Italian neo-realists took to the streets of Italy on the heels of the retreating Nazis. The French New Wave filmmakers are children of Rossellini, De Sica and Visconti. If they had possessed DV camcorders, they would have used them. However, those filmmakers had a vital visual tradition informed by different criteria than today's. And here resides a real dilemma, especially for the young and developing cinematographer. This was the dominant theme of my dialogue with the AFI students.

Last year, a noted director foreswore celluloid film in favor of DV, not for budgetary reasons, but because he said it would free him from the "tyranny" of the cinematographer. It is certainly true that any child can do basic

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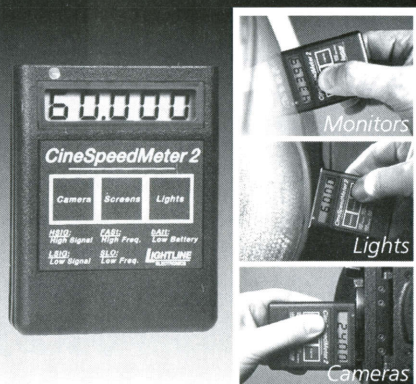
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image-capture on today's auto cameras. But someone indifferent or hostile to traditional filmmaking can scuttle all of the classic principles of cinematography, such as lighting, composition, movement and coverage, by deeming them irrelevant. Indeed, some of my colleagues feel they are helping to jackhammer the very foundations of their cinematic house by using this new technology. Others see DV as nothing more than the skeletal frame of a new room in that house.

Sixth Encounter

The last Saturday that I was filming *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood* with writer/director Callie Khouri was June 16 — Bloomsday, celebrated by James Joyce enthusiasts worldwide to honor the day in 1904 when Leopold Bloom and Stephen Daedalus wandered the streets of Dublin in the allegorical novel *Ulysses*. During our lunch break, crewmembers read from Joyce. Cast member Fionnula Flanagan performed highlights from her acclaimed interpretation of Molly Bloom's soliloquy, the concluding episode of the novel. I decided then to finally read this epic work, having postponed it since college. It requires intense concentration, but the reward is priceless. This led me to Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, the other great early 20th-century literary masterpiece I had long sidestepped. The threat of an industry strike and the later stalling of production gave me a window of time I had never expected.

Even now, early on in the 3,000-plus pages of Proust, I feel transformed. The encounters I've had with these two books have given me an exciting connection to a renewed approach to cinematography. The greatness of Joyce and Proust lies not only in their epic sociological reach or groundbreaking verbal and narrative structure, but also in the close, intimate, tightly focused way they observe the flow of life. As a reader you must slow down and see the smallest moments and physical details in a close-up, cinema-like scrutiny. Here is a single sentence from Proust, where the young narrator, Marcel, returning from an after-

noon walk in the country, goes to the room of his invalid aunt: "But in summer, when we came back to the house, the sun would not have set; and while we were upstairs paying our visit to Aunt Leonie its rays, sinking until they lay along her window-sill, would be caught and held by the large inner curtains and the loops which tied them back to the wall, and then, split and ramified and filtered, encrusting with tiny flakes of gold the citronwood of the chest-of-drawers, would illuminate the room with a delicate, slanting, woodland glow."

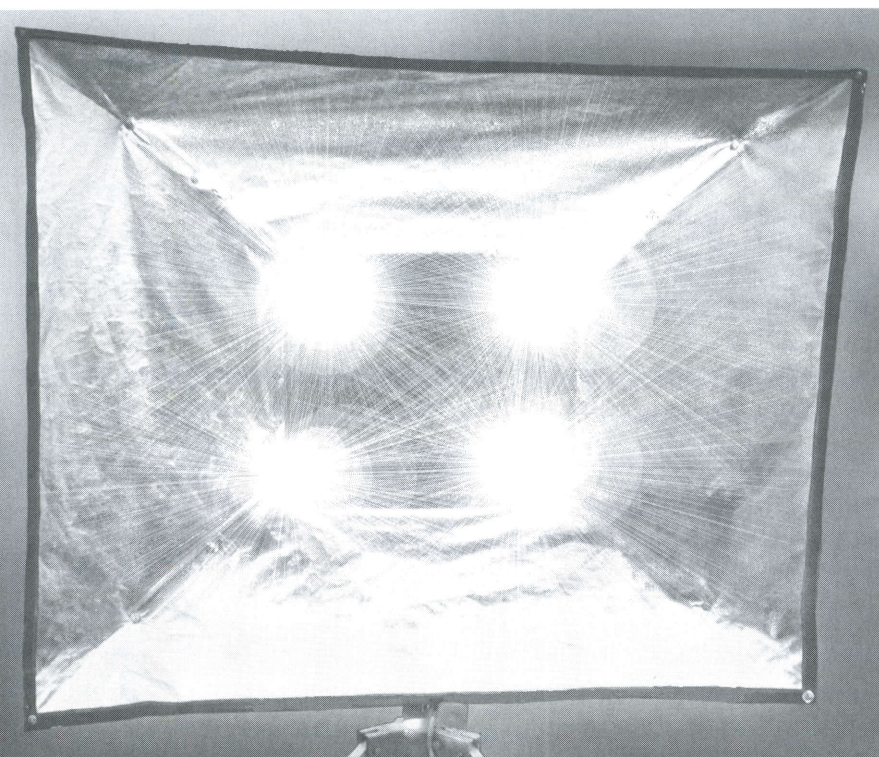
To film this moment with the detail and acuity of the written word is a challenge that flies in the face of contemporary style. It is alien to the grab-bag dynamic of much contemporary moviemaking. Yet what powerful image-making it exudes.

What I want to suggest, and what I firmly believe, is that there is a crucial need for cinematographers to reassert the primacy of the carefully crafted image as the essential dramatic device of movies — not from the lofty perspective of the temples of high art that I visited earlier, but from the ground zero of gritty, hands-on work. I believe that a constant study and reference to art, photography and literature can inform, renew and transform our own work. Who demands that the cinematographer be reduced to a technician capturing pixels or extruding celluloid like so much sausage? Only a few hectoring control freaks, pencil pushers and one-man-band egomaniacs.

The inherent magic of cinematography has never been the sorcery of optics, nor the legerdemain of the lab, nor the arcana of lights, gobos and century stands; rather, it is the creative eye of a man or woman interpreting the written prose of a screenplay, transforming it into lambent and luminous visual poetry. ■

New Products & Services

compiled by Douglas Bankston



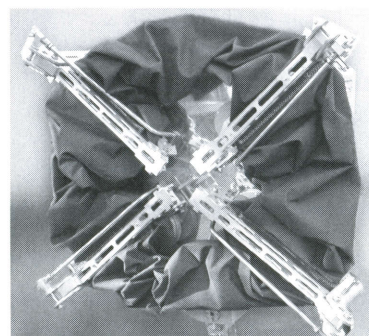
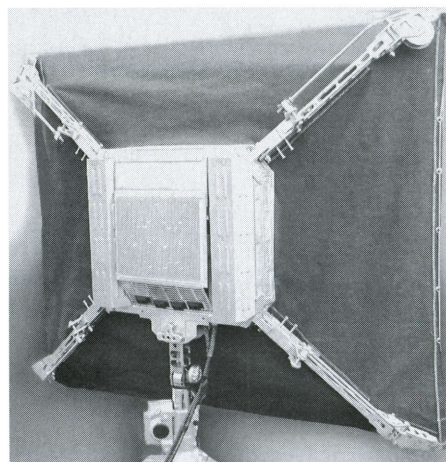
An Umbrella of Light

Over 30 years ago in Germany, H.W. Briesse decided to apply his training as a physicist and engineer to his passion for photography to create Briesse lights, which offered a complete solution for all lighting needs for photography, video and film throughout Europe. This sophisticated technology is now available in the United States through Briesse Lighting.

The Briesse system uses a sensitive approach to light management and takes into account the subtle nuances that light can achieve. Briesse technology builds upon aerospace research and development and can endure extreme heat. Briesse is the only lighting system that incorporates both flash and HMI (daylight) in the same mobile umbrella device. The lights achieve high f-stops with a low amount of wattage. HMI ballasts output 400 Hz in contrast to the 50 to 150 Hz industry standard, allowing

one to shoot up to 400 fps without getting a black frame and maintaining more detail in slow motion. HMI and flash light color can be varied in its temperature from daylight to tungsten by applying colored Pyrex shells. Additionally, flash bulbs can be ordered in specified color temperatures. All of the flash packs have a quick recycle time; the 400-watt flash pack, for example, recycles up to four flashes per second. All flash packs and HMI ballasts can be adapted to international current with exception of the 2,500-watt ballast, which requires 220-volt current. HMI and flash modules are lightweight and easy to travel with.

Briesse HMI and flash reflector umbrellas range from 2'6" to 7'2". A 10'10" reflector is available by special request. The reflectors are designed so that the light source can be focused, giving the photographer the ability to



create light effects ranging from a hard spot to an evenly lit, shadowless background. The user can place the light exactly where desired without having to move the entire unit. The strip lights are a new product in the reflector umbrella family and come in three sizes: Mini, Midi and Maxi. Other products include Standard, Fresnel, Zoomspot, Sun, Tubus and Floodlights, in addition to electronic ballasts, flash packs, generators, master boards and IR-transmitters.

Well-known photographers such as Anne Leibovitz, Peter Lindbergh and Anne Menke have worked with Briesse lights. The units also have been present on several film and TV sets, including the Touchstone Television production *HMO* and the Nickelodeon Movies production *Clockstoppers*, which will be released in spring 2002. Briesse lights were also used

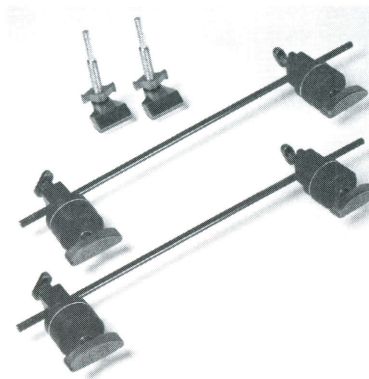
on the Wallflowers music video "Sleepwalker" (see *AC* Jan. '01). The 220cm (86") umbrella was intended for set decoration, but director Mark Romanek, after seeing the quality of the light, decided to use the Brieze umbrella as a key light. Recently, Brieze has been used on set for two NBC productions, *MONDO* and *ER*.

James Mitchell Belkin, director of photography for *MONDO*, was introduced to the lights by Ted Hayash, the second-unit cinematographer for the production. Several celebrities from NBC shows, including Emeril Lagasse, Jill Hennessy from *Crossing Jordan*, Alex Cross from *UC: Undercover*, and Sarah Chalke and Zach Braff from *Scrubs*, were filmed against greenscreen. Belkin wanted to use a light that would match the light in photos he had shot in New York that he planned to use as background. Most of those backgrounds were photographed under cloudy skies. As a solution, Brieze provided the 220cm (86") focusable umbrella with full diffusion (#3) and a 2,500-watt HMI ballast.

Belkin was impressed with the quality of the lights and noted the following characteristics: the lights were easy to set up and operate; they created a light quality that makes for very nice skin color; the focusable lights can be used hard spot or without any shadow; an entire group of people can be lit very evenly; and the light has a "wrap-around" quality.

"For me, the Brieze 220 2,500-watt HMI was love at first sight," he says. "I was impressed with the intensity and quality of the light. Upon viewing dailies, the directors and I were very pleased with the outcome. Greenscreen actors have to look great, and they did." Belkin used the 220cm umbrella again as a key light on the set of *ER*.

Brieze has showrooms in New York at 17 Little West 12th Street, Suite 303 (Buzzer #3), and in Hollywood at 1035 N. Orange Drive. Brieze can offer hands-on demonstrations. For more information, contact Brieze Lighting at (212) 414-9596 in New York, (323) 960-1188 in Los Angeles, or toll-free (877) 544-4822, or visit their Web site at www.brieze.com.



Portable Modification

Matthews Studio Equipment, Inc. has created RoadRags, a new portable lighting-modification system that allows the location cinematographer, photographer or videographer to quickly and easily duplicate studio lighting effects in the field using portable lights. By using different materials, the filmmaker can block light as well as create contrasts, different light ratios and diffusion.

The RoadRags package consists of two folding 18"x24" frames, single scrim, double scrim, artificial silk and flag contained in a convenient carrying bag that fits into most portable lighting kits. Optional reflector panels are also available. The elastic-corded frames fold easily for storage and transport.

Working well with MSE's RoadRags is the MiniGrip family of smaller mounting devices used for clamping and holding a variety of production tools and accessories, eliminating the need for extra stands.

The MiniGrip kit includes four lightweight 2" MiniGrip Heads with $\frac{3}{8}$ " and $\frac{5}{8}$ " mounting holes and two new-style Mini-Mathellini Clamps that are half as large as the regular Mathellini, along with two 20" arms, all contained in a carrying bag. Made of high-impact composite material, the MiniGrip kit can be used with camera attachments and other accessories as well as lighting equipment.

Matthews Studio Equipment, Inc., (818) 843-6715, fax (323) 849-1525, e-mail: info@msegrip.com, Web site: www.msegrip.com.

Satellite-X Lights the Way

The Satellite-X softlight is a 4'x5'x1' unit that uses four 575-watt HMI bulbs on two 20-amp circuits. The flicker-free ballasts and switches are fully enclosed within the light. No header cables are necessary. The Satellite-X collapses to approximately 2'x2½'x1' for storage. Full setup or breakdown takes two people two or three minutes. The light typically uses a full gridcloth diffuser, but the operator can substitute other material or gels or use no diffuser at all.

Conrad Hall, ASC had experience with the new Satellight-X HMI softlight on the set of the upcoming release *Road to Perdition*. "We were shooting in a small house with huge windows and not enough room for lights," he says. "Our gaffer, Tom Stern, broke out his new 'find,' a broad but very slim daylight softlight that we could back into tight corners or place flat against walls. It stayed out of frame and produced beautiful light with plenty of punch.

"The Satellight-X was just the right tool for other shots," he continues, "and in the future, I'll want one or two nearby for all sorts of daylight and nighttime uses—key, fill, backlight, overhead, etc. It's the type of invention that you try the first time and think, 'Yes, of course. Where has this been all my life?'"

The Satellight-X is available for rent or lease from Satellite-X, Inc. For more information, call toll-free (866) 315-1400 or (310) 315-1400, cell phone (310) 849-3023, Web site: www.satellight-x.com.

Wide View

Long Valley Equipment has introduced the lightweight R-8 lens, its Russian Peleng 3.5/8mm conversion available in a stainless PL mount. The lens covers 35mm, Super 16mm and 16mm formats and will not vignette the corners of the 35mm 1.85 frame or the high-definition 1.78 frame. Long Valley Equipment notes that "tests show the R-8 and the Nikkor 8 are virtually indistinguishable in terms of sharpness, contrast and color."

Long Valley Equipment, (908) 876-1022, e-mail: longvalleyequip@att.net, Web site: longvalleyequip.com.

Stage in the Valley

Sun Valley Stages, located in California's San Fernando Valley, has opened a new 3,600-square-foot production space in Los Angeles that includes a 1,600-square-foot insert stage known as Stage One, a dressing room and production offices.

The 40'x40' Stage One is designed for producers who want to save money when a larger space is not needed. The stage has a ground-level roll-up door for easy access for equipment carts, sets and vehicles. The 300-amp, 125-volt AC stage has complete power distribution, including Bates extension cables, lunchboxes and stingers.

A complete lighting and grip package is available and features a variety of tungsten lights from 10Ks to the smallest fixture. Strobe lights are available for still photographers. "Having lighting and grip already on stage saves the producer from having to rent a grip truck," says stage manager Gerry McKee, "and it eliminates load and unload days. It is faster and cheaper because the heavy equipment is already here."

A full dressing room with makeup area and a cast lounge area is located next to the stage. A makeup artist/hair stylist is also available. A production office and conference room are included with the stage rental. There is also projection capability for viewing 16mm film dailies or video dailies. A complete set of hardwall scenery flats is also included for the art department's needs.

Sun Valley Stages is located near the Burbank airport at 9850 Glenoaks Blvd., Sun Valley, California, 91352. Call (818) 768-4054 or visit the Web site at www.movieighting.com.

Steady As She Goes

Motion Picture Marine's two-axis Hydro Gyro is a small, lightweight camera-stabilization head well suited for the harshest filming environments. The 30-pound Hydro Gyro mounts between

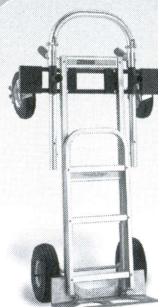
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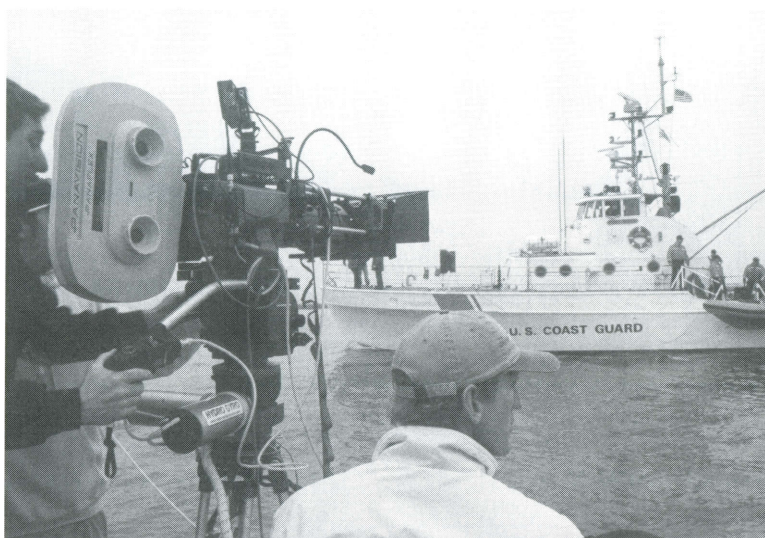
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the tripod and the pan/tilt head to remove vehicle motion before it reaches the camera. It can stabilize cameras weighing up to 150 pounds with lenses up to 550mm and can be mounted to virtually any vehicle, vessel, aircraft, crane or cable system.

The waterproof Hydro Gyro maintains a fixed horizon while giving the cameraman hands-on camera control for stable footage in rough seas, and removes pitch and roll both on and off road. The Hydro Gyro allows independent use of damping or shaker devices to add or subtract vibrations and shock without affecting its stabilization performance. For dolly and crane work, the Hydro Gyro can instantly level uneven dolly track and keep the camera level regardless of boom angle.

A three-axis version will be available soon that adds 360-degree panning, directional lock and full remote control. A Hydro Gyro rental includes an on-set technician.

For more information, contact Motion Picture Marine in Marina del Rey, California, (310) 822-1100, fax (310) 822-2679, or in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, (954) 925-6675, Web site: www.motionpicturemarine.com or www.hydrogyro.com.

Fingerless

SetWear has introduced its new fingerless M-Pact glove for procedures that require more control, such as tiny camera adjustments. The gloves feature

convenient pull-tabs for easier removal and gel pads in the palms and between the index finger and thumb to lessen impact and vibrations. Neoprene knuckle panels provide increased flexibility and protection.

Fingerless M-Pact gloves are available for purchase from the ASC store at www.cinematographer.com.

For more information about SetWear products, call (877) SETWEAR or (818) 340-0540, fax (818) 340-6434, or visit www.setwear.com.

Kodak Student Web Site

Eastman Kodak has launched a new student Web site that offers news, information, membership benefits, reports from school campuses, technical support, and an open forum for the next generation of filmmakers to share their stories.

"Our mission is to provide an easily accessible forum for student filmmakers around the world," says John Mason, manager of the Student Filmmaker Program for Kodak. "This Web site will give them news they can use and opportunities to share ideas. Our goal is to serve the creative, educational and technical needs of student filmmakers around the world by establishing an Internet community."

The site will include news and in-depth stories with exclusive interviews with cutting-edge filmmakers and deans and faculty members from Chapman

University, the University of California at Los Angeles, and the University of Southern California, among others. *In Camera on Campus* (Kodak's student newsletter), *The Student Handbook*, *Exploring the Color Image* and other Kodak publications will be available for downloading. Subscribing to the site entitles student filmmakers to previews and advance notice of upcoming events.

For more information, visit www.kodak.com/go/student.

High-Flying DV

Sachtler's small camera crane, the CamCrane DV, is designed especially for the new generation of DV and MiniDV camcorders that weigh up to 5.5 kg. The CamCrane DV can be directly mounted on tripods with 75mm (3") or 100mm (3.9") bowls. A built-in level for camera-crane adjustment is used to align the camera plate parallel to the horizon. Two discs, one at the camera base and one at the camera's movement axis, enable users to maintain a perfectly parallel camera position throughout the lift. The lever arm also enable operators



to adjust the camera tilt during lifting and lowering, thus allowing operators to position the camera above or below the object being filmed. The outrig and tower that are fixed to the crane pipe with solid

hinges provide the crane with the stability necessary for fluid camera motion.

The CamCrane DV weighs 5.5 kg in its carrying bag without counterweights and has a transport length of 110cm. The crane's three pipe telescopes provide three different setup lengths: 110cm (3'7"), 180cm (5'11") and 255cm (8'4"). By using a telescope adapter, a total height of about 320cm (10'6") can be achieved. Dumbbell disc weights or sandbags can be used as counterweights.

Sachtler GmbH & Co., (+49) 89 321 58 200, fax (+49) 89 321 58 227, e-mail: contact@sachtler.de, Web site: www.sachtler.com.

New Matte Box

Birns & Sawyer has introduced its exclusive, lightweight Image 2000 Matte Box. With built-in step-down rings, these boxes are highly flexible and can be adapted to a wide range of cameras. The Image 2000 can be configured with two filter slots for standard glass filters or with three slots for optical resin filters. No filter trays are needed since filters are held in place with a unique spring-loaded pressure system and a thumb screw lock.

Birns & Sawyer, (323) 466-8211, fax (323) 466-1868, e-mail: info@birnsandsawyer.com, Web site: www.birnsandsawyer.com.

Cinema-Smart HD Lens

Plus 8 Video has released its Cinesmart 18x7.5 High-Definition zoom lens for cine-style applications. The 18x1 Cinesmart HD zoom lens was developed utilizing the proven optical performance of a Fujinon HA20x7.5 HD telephoto ENG-style lens. In converting the lens to a cine-style, Plus 8 changed the focus markings to provide a linear motion to the lens, allowing the user a finer feel through a more useable focal range. Each quarter-inch turn represents about 5'. Focus markings appear on both the left and right sides, a standard on cine-style lenses.

"There had been no accurate markings for focus distances for video," notes Marker Karahadian, president of



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Plus 8 Video. "Working motion-picture-style with an assistant pulling focus, there were numbers on the lens barrel but no witness marks. So we took the lens apart and articulated the focus mechanism in a more precise manner and spread the scale out in a range where most production is done."

The focus mechanism itself now has three-cam lifters that significantly increase optical stability over twin-cam systems. The back focus has a much finer pitch that extends the range of focus and makes it more exact. The rear elements are encased in a new metal housing on twin-cam lifters to keep the lens from shifting side to side, further increasing the lens' optical stability.

The iris has been calibrated in T-stops. At 18x, Plus 8 has removed the 2x of magnification and eliminated ramping so there is a flat light transmission between the wide angle and tight shot. All gearing has been modified to a 0.8 pitch to accommodate cine-style accessories such as zoom and follow focus motors and clamp-on devices.

The Cinesmart 18x7.5 HD zoom lenses are available for rental at Plus 8 Video. Plus 8 can also modify customers' own Fujinon HA20x7.5 HD lenses, converting them to Cinesmart lenses.

For more information, contact Plus 8 Video, (818) 845-6480, Web site: www.plus8video.com.

Soft Light

Photoflex has introduced the MovieDome line of softboxes that accommodate large, open-faced lights up to 6,000 watts. The new MovieDome softboxes feature heat vents on all four sides and a wider-than-usual rear profile that cools hot fixtures and keeps them a safe distance away from the interior fabric. The highly reflective silver fabric is an evolution of the company's Brimstone technology that offers an exceptional degree of heat resistance while ensuring maximum output from any light source.

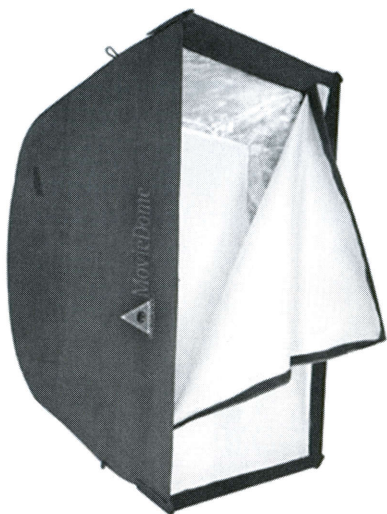
"The recessed, removable diffusion face and baffles allow maximum control of the light source," says Sharon Reeves, Photoflex president, "and

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permit change within seconds from sharp contrast to soft, natural light. The double-diffusion design evenly lights the MovieDome's interior and face, eliminating extreme highlights and hotspots to create even, natural lighting."

The new softbox can be used with a wide variety of open-faced lights such as Par lights set on full flood or

Fresnels using wide-angle lenses. They also fit major-brand HMI and tungsten fixtures.

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Bold Light from Kobold

The Swiss company Kobold has introduced its new double-bank Lumax SB 12 and SB 22 light banks for 60cm (SB 12) and 120cm (SB 22) fluorescent tubes. The new cold-light system is suitable for use on location as well as in the studio. The new barndoor hinge was constructed with heavy loads in mind and requires no maintenance. With new adapter clips and the optimized reflector system, fluorescent tubes of 38mm or 26mm in diameter can be used. The robust plastic housing of the lamps means less weight and reduces ceiling loads for indoor work. The lights can be stacked and safely transported with the tubes in place. The electronic, continuously dimmable Lumax EB 2x20/40 electronic ballast unit guarantees durability and flicker-free operation. Color-corrected tubes manufactured especially for Kobold yield no green tinge.

Kobold has also released its weather-resistant Daylight DWO 200 light. The new lamp meets the IP 54

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Points East

Spanish Apparitions

by Eric Rudolph



A child's ghost haunts a Spanish orphanage in *The Devil's Backbone*, shot by Guillermo Navarro, ASC and directed by Guillermo Del Toro. The supernatural melodrama is set during the Spanish Civil War.

A large bomb falls from the air into the courtyard of a Spanish orphanage but fails to explode; at the same time, a young orphan is murdered. So begins director Guillermo del Toro's new independent feature *The Devil's Backbone*, an unconventional ghost story shot in Spain and set in a remote and impoverished orphanage during the Spanish Civil War. As the tale unfolds, the mystery of the orphan's death unravels in eerie, disquieting ways.

Del Toro (*Cronos*, *Mimic*, *Blade 2*) refers to this tale of humanity struggling to persevere amid death, cruelty and deprivation as a "corroded fairy tale." The film recently opened in New York and Los Angeles and will begin playing in other cities this month.

Shot by Guillermo Navarro, ASC, *The Devil's Backbone* boasts an atmospheric look exemplified by a consistent and stirring mixture of cool

and warm light, and by the cloak of shadows surrounding the sparingly lit characters. The picture's visual style is an impressive achievement, especially given that Navarro (*From Dusk Till Dawn*, *Jackie Brown*) had virtually no prep period — he was busy filming *Spy Kids* in Austin, Texas, when he normally would have been prepping *The Devil's Backbone*.

Fortunately, Del Toro resides in Austin, so he and Navarro were able to devise the film's look during the cameraman's time off from *Spy Kids*. The cinematographer also communicated with the project's production designer and crew in Spain via e-mail. This arrangement worked so well that three large sets had been pre-lit by the time Navarro arrived at the locations in Spain. "I never met the Spanish crew until I arrived on the set," he explains. "I finished *Spy Kids* in Austin on a Friday

and was shooting *The Devil's Backbone* in Spain the following Monday."

Del Toro says the picture's overall visual scheme is meant to evoke "the tone of an old memory." As the film opens, a voiceover muses about the nature of ghosts, suggesting that they are like insects trapped in amber. "This line prompted the earth tones we used so much," says the director, who felt that the varying levels of darkness in the film simply seemed right for a classic horror story. "We wanted an expressionistic look, with several layers of black and shadow in the frame." He maintains that the film might not have succeeded "if Guillermo hadn't been willing to let the story take place in darkness as much as possible."

Del Toro also reserves a great deal of praise for production designer Cesar Macarron and his team. "Guillermo is fond of saying that no



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amount of good work and good lighting will help if the sets are not the right color, shape and texture," he notes. Although Macarron's work enriches many scenes, there are other sequences in which very little light hits the walls — an approach that helps viewers to focus on the characters and reinforces the unsettling mood.

Navarro took an unusual approach to achieve this highly controlled play of light. His main tools were 650-watt Source Four ellipsoidal fixtures and small, easily positioned silver reflectors that he describes as "smaller than a piece of paper." These tools enabled him to light dark interiors in a dramatic and emotionally powerful way.

Less was definitely more on the set. Navarro used as few as two Source Fours in certain scenes, along with practicals such as a candle or flame from an open stove, to selectively illuminate the surrounding darkness and bring the sinister mood of the script to life. The Source Fours were usually hung because the interiors were too small for light stands, and they were often used in conjunction with the reflectors to turn one light source into two. Sidelighting predominates throughout the film.

"We had absolute darkness peppered with light from the controlled beams of the Source Fours and the tiny silver reflectors," explains Del Toro. "We could accent exactly the pieces we needed to see. Guillermo was able to rim faces, light eyes and delineate textures without washing everything [with spill light]. I welcomed this approach, which involved showing just enough [of the action] while keeping the scene layered in [varying amounts of] darkness."

Navarro used Kodak Vision 500T 5279 for night scenes and Vision 250D 5246 for day exteriors.

Much of the stirring counterpoint of cool and warm light takes place during night scenes in and around the orphanage courtyard, which is lit with an evocative blue-green light. The filmmakers determined early on that their night lighting approach would be crucial to the overall tone of the film. "We didn't want to use the standard blue moonlight," says

Navarro. "We wanted the night shots to contribute to the period feel." They therefore chose a combination of deep emerald and blue gels for the main night source, a crane-mounted tungsten 18K, which was used as a backlight. (Source Fours provided sidelight on the actors.) Del Toro feels that the color choice makes the nights "look like nights one remembers as a child — beautiful and unsettling."

Another unusual aspect of the production was the use of a Spanish-made crane that was strong enough to carry an operator but small enough to fit through doorways. The cranes are handmade and don't even have an official name, according to the filmmakers. "The crane has a little seat for the operator, and it booms up and down naturally, with no hydraulics, which I find are often late," explains Navarro. "This crane allowed us to have camera movement all of the time. There are only two or three locked-down shots in the entire film."

Del Toro estimates that the crane was used for 80 percent of the film and notes that it was so small that it was "almost like a toy." Its versatility comes from its diminutive size, and from a unique design that meshes well with human ergonomics. He's planning to import one as soon as possible.

The show's A and B cameras were Navarro's own Moviecam Compacts fitted with Zeiss Superspeed T1.3 prime lenses as well as the three Zeiss Variable Primes (16-30mm, 29-60mm and 55-105mm, all T2.2), which were used mainly for the crane work.

Del Toro asserts that *The Devil's Backbone* was the "best filmmaking experience of my life. You give up a lot of choices [in the Hollywood environment]; in the independent and European approach, you give up some *comforts*. I'd rather give up the comforts and gain some freedom."

"We had complete freedom to do what we thought the story required," adds Navarro. "It was more of an 'auteurist' than 'industry' experience." ■

Eric Rudolph can be contacted via e-mail at erudolph2@nyc.rr.com

Books in Review

by Ray Zone

Silent Film and the Triumph of the American Myth

by Paula Marantz Cohen
Oxford University Press
224 pp., paper \$19.95,
cloth \$39.95
ISBN 0-19-514094-X (paper)
0-19-514093 (cloth)

American Audiences on Movies & Moviegoing

by Tom Stempel
The University Press of Kentucky
296 pp., \$27.50
ISBN 0-8131-2183-3

In May of 1906, the Edison Manufacturing Company released a 40-second motion picture photographed by Edwin S. Porter called *Three American Beauties*. One of very few American films of the time that were hand-colored by stencil, the film features three brief sequences. It opens with a close-up of a vibrantly crimson American Beauty rose that dissolves slowly into a lovely woman in a yellow dress playfully holding the rose by its stem. This lovely flower of American womanhood dissolves into a richly chromatic image of the American flag waving in the breeze, which fades suddenly to a black starfield. The mythmaking power of the motion-picture camera is clear in this 40-second sequence, which subtly suggests a divine presence in the nation's destiny.

Three American Beauties usually played at the end of a program of films at a time when the enormous appeal of the motion picture was just becoming evident. The film was so popular that Porter was compelled to reshoot it in 1907 because so many prints had been made from the original negative. Paula Marantz Cohen has written an insightful study of this crucial period in the early

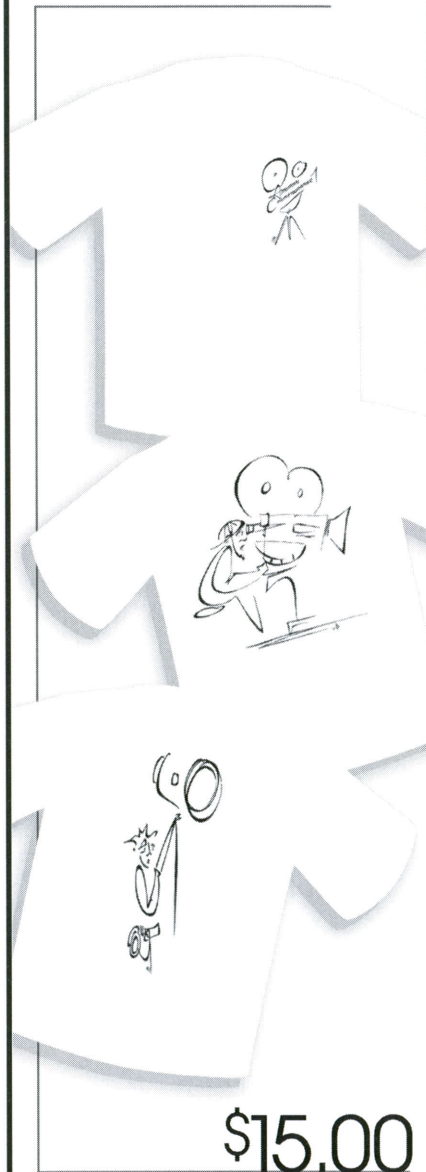
20th century, when motion pictures and America were both ascending as cultural powers. Cohen illustrates that the new art form of film was intimately associated with America, its people, its culture and its ideals.

"The silent era," she writes, "offers a wealth of material for understanding American experience, past and present." A new kind of person came with the development of film: the movie star, a figure whose incandescent celebrity was different from anything seen before. With a wide-ranging survey of literature and art, Cohen uses silent film stars such as William Hart, Buster Keaton, Douglas Fairbanks and Lillian Gish as focal points to explore the democratic features of silent film and the triumph of values connected to the rise of America in the 20th century.

In the opening chapter, "Literary Antecedents of American Silent Film," Cohen cites a 1917 film, *The Little American*, in which Little Mary (Mary Pickford) is caught in the throes of World War I; she is trapped in a European château into which the enemy is breaking. "Her eyes wide with fright, her hands plucking nervously at the lace of her collar, Little Mary reaches into the front of her dress and pulls out a ragged square of cloth — a tiny American flag — that she waves in front of the enemy. It's the kind of small but noble gesture common in American silent film that makes even the most jaded spectator gulp with emotion," Cohen writes. Though the marauders are not stopped, "Mary's symbolic gesture is a powerful statement of affiliation and character. It makes clear that she will find a way to defeat the enemy, that no risk is too great."

Cohen illustrates how the silent film used three fundamental concepts

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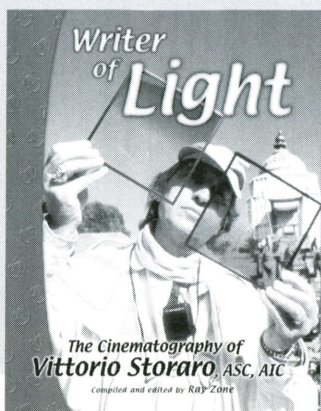
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— the body, the landscape and the face — which evolved into the cinematic genres of comedy, the Western and the melodrama. Her chapter on the face is of particular interest to cinematographers. "Billy, move in! Get that face!" exclaimed D.W. Griffith while frantically directing his cameraman, Billy Bitzer, to capture Lillian Gish's face during the making of *Way Down East* (1920). Griffith knew that filming the face in close-up would transform narrative. "It is a unique attribute of film, in that it allows us to gaze at a face in motion for a prolonged period of time, to see the restless energy of thought and feeling play over the features," Cohen writes. "Until the advent of film, we did so only insofar as we were personally involved with the faces in question. Film was a revolutionary means of providing intimacy without involvement."

Tom Stempel's *American Audiences on Movies & Moviegoing* is an equally interesting piece of cinematic sociology. Many of the author's observations are surprisingly intimate, and all demonstrate the importance of moviegoing to the American experience. Stempel has spent more than 50 years in the dark watching movies and moviegoers. In tracing shifting trends and tastes in moviegoing, and by concentrating on ordinary people and their opinions, Stempel examines the power that films have in American society.

"Moviegoing in America is a blood sport," Stempel writes. "Watching movies is an emotional if not physical activity." In questioning 150 moviegoers about their experiences, Stempel examines more than 40 popular movies, beginning with a 1947 reissue of Twentieth Century Fox's *Jesse James* (1939). "It grabbed my imagination with its color and its setting," Stempel observes. By the time he was 6 years old, Stempel had "gotten into heavy moviegoing."

In the first chapter, "Childhoods," moviegoers recount the role movies played as formative experiences in their lives. "My grandmother took me to see *Cleopatra* [1963] when it first opened in a big fancy theater in Detroit," recalls Peggy Dille, now in her fifties. "It was

one of the nicest experiences, maybe the nicest experience I ever had with my grandmother. It was like some kind of religious ritual initiation that set up a special bond between [us], as if she were bringing me into a new, secret world where special knowledge and power would be passed from her to me."

Stempel approaches his subject by first making personal observations about the audiences, then by looking at box-office results, and finally by directly quoting spectators' remarks. He has organized his book in a roughly chronological fashion; chapters include "Hollywood's Fifties," "Sex and Seriousness" and "Television and Movies," as well as chapters on *Star Wars* and Steven Spielberg.

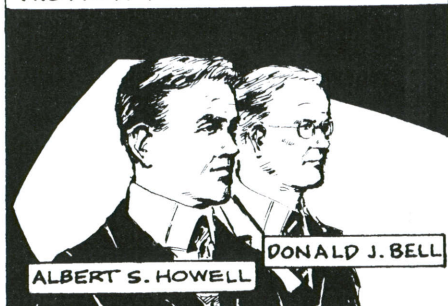
He always focuses on the personal side of moviegoing — and it gets pretty personal. "First I met the blonde, Lisa, in Vegas and made plans to go out on an old-fashioned date," recounts Wil Dimpflmaier of an experience at a drive-in. "We had decided to see *Men in Black* and *Nothing to Lose* [both 1997], and I was interested in seeing both movies. Well, after a few beers and Lisa's top coming off, combined with the low visual quality of the screen, I kinda lost interest in the movie...."

A refreshing antidote to dry statistical summary, Stempel's entertaining tome offers a different perspective on a half-century of American cinema. Even though Griffith's hope for the power of film in America may not yet be realized, the medium's cultural impact is enormous. "We've gone beyond Babel, beyond words," Griffith told Lillian Gish during the filming of *Intolerance* (1916). "We've found a universal language, a power that can make men brothers and end war forever. Remember that when you stand in front of the camera." ■

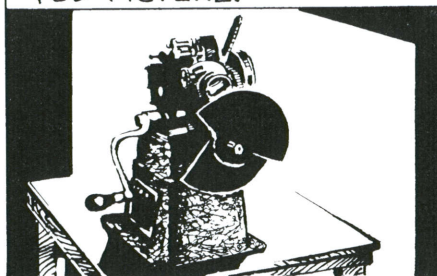
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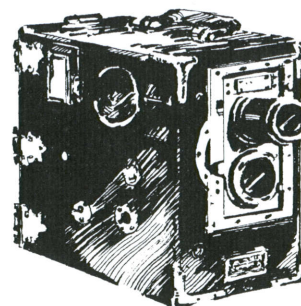
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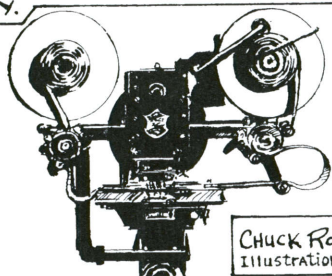
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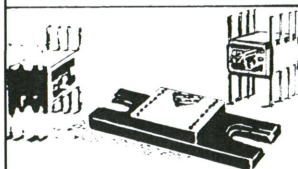


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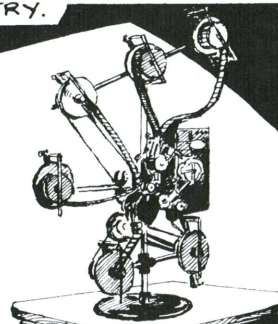
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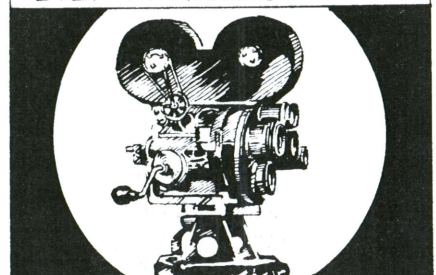


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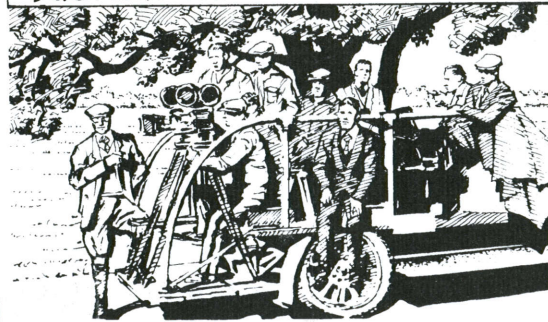


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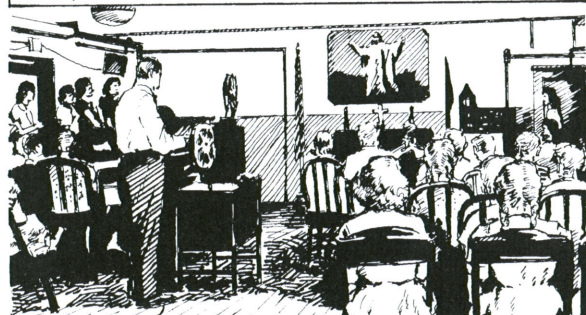


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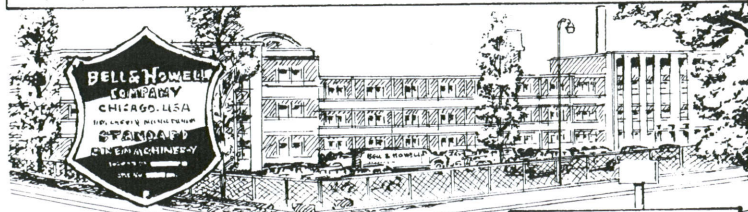
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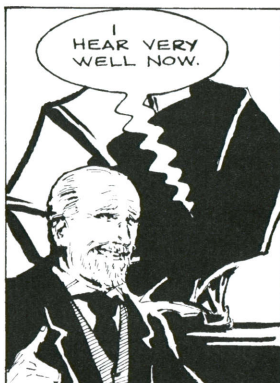


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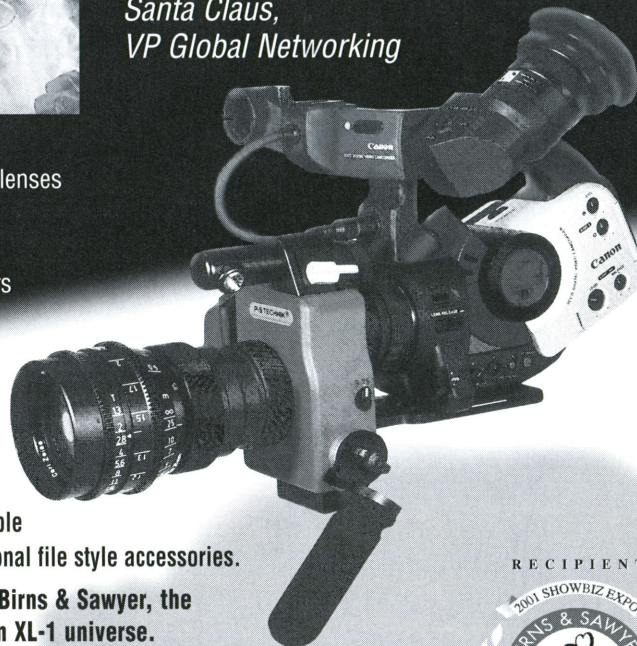
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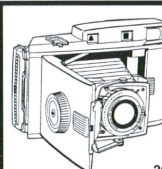
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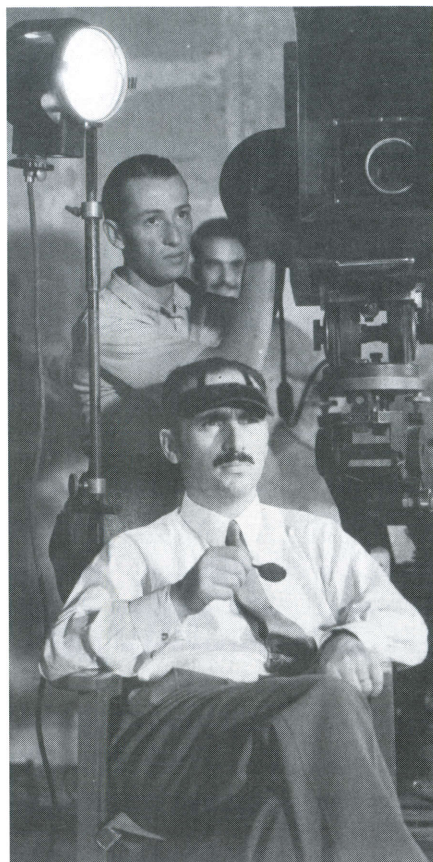


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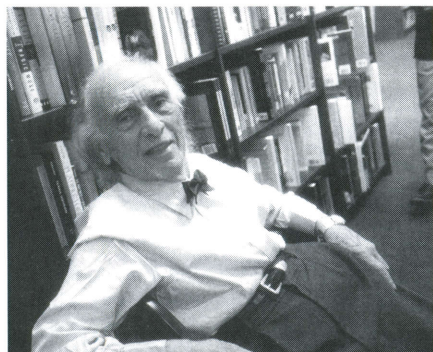
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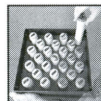
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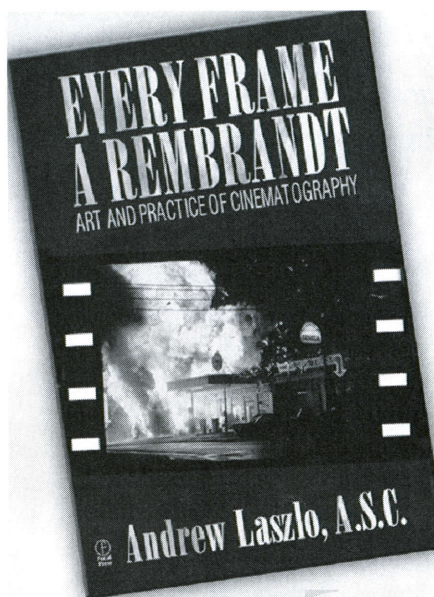
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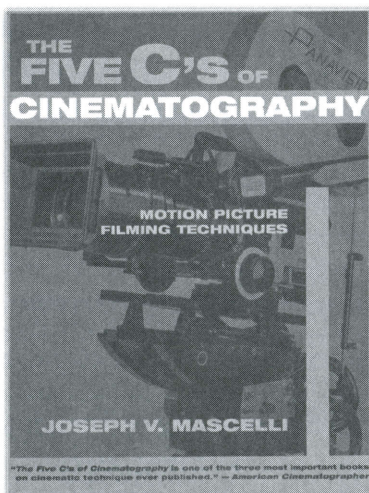
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From the Clubhouse



Kovacs Earns Lifetime Award

The American Society of Cinematographers announced on October 2 that veteran cameraman Laszlo Kovacs, ASC will receive the organization's Lifetime Achievement Award early next year. The award, which is presented annually to an individual whose body of work has made a significant impression on the art of filmmaking, will be given to Kovacs during the 16th Annual ASC Outstanding Achievement Awards on February 17, 2002, at the Century Plaza Hotel in Century City.

On hand for the announcement at the ASC Clubhouse in Hollywood were previous Lifetime Achievement honorees and ASC members William A. Fraker, Conrad Hall, Victor J. Kemper, Owen Roizman and Vilmos Zsigmond.

Introduced to the audience by Roizman, co-chairman of the ASC Awards Committee, Kovacs thanked the Society for the recognition and wistfully noted, "I will always be thankful for everything that Hollywood has done for me, who grew up as a peasant boy dreaming of being a part of this place. I

feel like I should pinch myself, but I don't want to wake up."

Born in 1933 outside of Budapest, Hungary, Kovacs fled his homeland with film-school friend Zsigmond following the Soviet crackdown of 1956; they arrived in the United States as political refugees three years later with the shared goal of becoming cinematographers in Hollywood.

After years of struggle shooting low-budget commercials and exploitation movies, Kovacs' breakthrough came in 1969 when he shot *Easy Rider* for director/actor Dennis Hopper. Following that success, Kovacs collaborated with several of Hollywood's new generation of innovative directors, including Robert Altman (for whom he shot *That Cold Day in the Park*), Hal Ashby (*Shampoo*), Peter Bogdanovich (*Targets*, *Paper Moon*, *What's Up, Doc?*), Bob Rafelson (*Five Easy Pieces*, *The King of Marvin Gardens*) and Martin Scorsese (*New York, New York*).

Taking the mike from Roizman, Zsigmond spoke of the brotherhood that he and Kovacs had enjoyed over the

years. Other well-wishers included ASC associate members Joerg D. Agin, the former president of Eastman Kodak's Motion Picture Imaging Division, and Rob Hummel, currently the Senior Vice President of Digital Cinema at Sony Corporation of America.

Kovacs' longtime gaffer Richmond L. Aguilar spoke eloquently about his working relationship with the cameraman, who, Aguilar noted, always seeks to be creative and do better work.

Kovacs has photographed more than 60 features, including *Ghostbusters*, *Mask*, *Say Anything*, *Copycat*, *Return to Me* and *Miss Congeniality*.

—David E. Williams

Laszlo Participates in Kodak Visiting Artist Seminar

Andrew Laszlo, ASC, offered practical insights into the world of filmmaking to students at Regent University during the Kodak Visiting Artists seminar, held on October 5 and 6. Laszlo walked the students through all aspects of a cinematographer's life, including responsibilities, functions and duties, placing a particular emphasis on the creation of the image. He illustrated and discussed artistic and lighting techniques using examples from five of his films.

"The Kodak Visiting Artists program is designed to enrich the educational experience of student filmmakers," says John Mason, manager of Kodak's Student Filmmaker Program. "The program is one way of giving something back to the industry's future generation of filmmakers. It's an important investment and Kodak is proud to play a supporting role."

For further information, please contact Andrew Quicke at (757) 226-4226, or visit the Web site at www.kodak.com/go/student. ■

The co-chairman of the ASC Awards Committee, Owen Roizman (right) introduces Laszlo Kovacs, ASC, who will receive the Society's Lifetime Achievement Award in February.

WRAP SHOT

Beckoned by a vision of her late husband, Sharon (Mimi Rogers) takes her daughter Mary (Kimberly Cullum) to the desert to await God's arrival in *The Rapture*.



The Rapture is one of the most remarkable films ever to appear under the banner of "independent film." Ironically, when it was released 10 years ago, writer/director Michael Tolkin said he was convinced that independent cinema had become as unimaginative as big-budget Hollywood fare. "After *E.T.* I felt a complete break with entertainment, and I was tired of independent cinema, too," he told *The Village Voice*. "All the epiphanies were predictable."

The same cannot be said of *The Rapture*. The picture follows Sharon (Mimi Rogers), a restless and unhappy information operator who whiles away most evenings by cruising for couples with the urbane swinger Vic (Patrick Bauchau). Increasingly despondent, Sharon begins questioning whether God can assuage "the pain in my life." She undergoes a religious conversion, making a radical break with the life she has known, and finds her newfound faith tested by trials worthy of Job himself. The film culminates with the Apocalypse, signaled by Gabriel's horn and the appearance of the Four Horsemen, and Sharon's final reckoning yields an unpredictable epiphany indeed.

To make the picture, Tolkin, a former journalist and first-time filmmaker, teamed with cinematographer Bojan Bazelli, whose eclectic résumé

included *Pumpkinhead*, *Patty Hearst* and *King of New York*. Most of *The Rapture* plays in long, single takes that allow conversations to unfold in a natural manner. In a commentary on the laserdisc of the film, Rogers and co-star David Duchovny (who plays Sharon's ill-fated husband) praise the use of long takes for allowing them to better interact with each other. Tolkin says the strategy was practically motivated as well; the ambitious film's short shoot meant that the filmmakers often lacked the time to go back and shoot close-ups.

The Rapture was shot over 30 days in and around Los Angeles. The most difficult location was the desert, where Sharon takes her daughter (Kimberly Cullum) to await God's arrival in the film's final act. The crew didn't realize its desert location was at the foot of an airport runway until they arrived at the site, and Rogers recalls that all of the desert scenes were shot between plane takeoffs and landings. The film's most horrific scene unfolds at magic hour, and the filmmakers scrambled up a barren hill with Rogers and Cullum to capture the needed shots in just 12 minutes.

One of the production's biggest challenges was portraying the fantastic on a limited budget, but Bazelli and Tolkin accomplished this feat both artfully and simply. For example,

Sharon's transformation in a seedy motel room is signified by an ever-brightening light shining through red curtains in the window behind her. To depict the Rapture (when believers are "taken up" to Heaven) at the end of the film, the filmmakers shot at night in an isolated area of Los Angeles County; they placed Rogers on a dolly seat, fired up a smoke machine and slowly elevated the seat.

The Rapture was one of the first films released by Fine Line Features, the "specialty label" introduced by New Line in 1990. Wary of the protests that had greeted Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* three years earlier, Fine Line screened the picture for Christian theologians and laymen throughout 1991; they praised its serious treatment of faith's difficult terrain. Fine Line President Ira Deutschman said he saw *The Rapture* as an intellectual/theological horror film, a sort of *Close Encounters of the Religious Kind*.

The film opened in October 1991 in Los Angeles, New York and Atlanta. New Line's own Atlanta rep refused to handle it and one southern theater chain refused to exhibit it. *Los Angeles Times* film critic Kenneth Turan praised the picture for being "that most audacious of cinematic ventures, a film of theological ideas." J. Hoberman of *The Village Voice* offered a backhanded compliment, applauding it for "infecting the New York Film Festival with a welcome case of insanity."

Audience responses to *The Rapture* were polarized. Tolkin recalls on the laserdisc that some viewers missed the picture's final twist because they walked out with less than a minute to go. He muses, "Sometimes I wonder whether working with the questions of the moment is really what drama should be doing, or whether that isn't the place for journalism." In 1998, Tolkin helped craft a very different doomsday scenario, *Deep Impact*.

—Rachael K. Bosley

Photo courtesy of Fine Line Features.

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